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# MONSIEUR NICOLAS

*or*

# THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

## THE SECOND VOLUME

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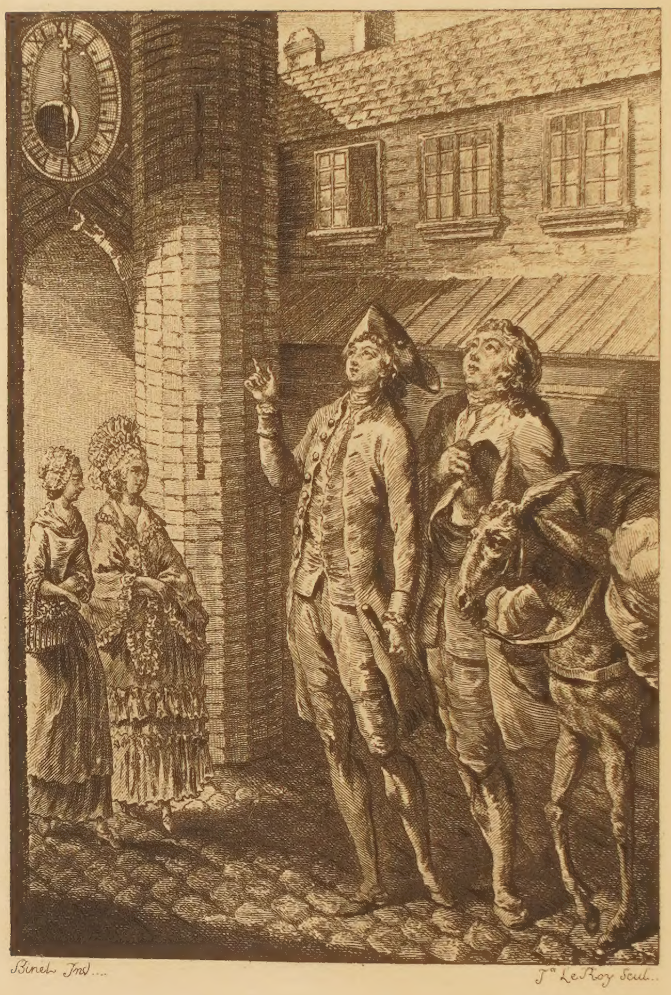

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# MONSIEUR NICOLAS

*or*

# THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

## *The Intimate Memoirs of*

## RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE

*Translated into English by*

R. CROWDY MATHERS

*Edited with an Introduction by*

HAVELOCK ELLIS

VOLUME II

DISCARD

*for subscribers only*

JOHN RODKER · LONDON · MCMXXX

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# THE

# THIRD EPOCH

*Continued*

1750-1751

# *THIRD EPOCH*

*(continued)*

ABOUT Whitsuntide my brothers sent me home with a letter to my father of which I could guess the contents. They hoped that, when he had read it, he would keep me at home, or at least only send me back to say goodbye. To be made the bearer of slanders against myself was more than I could endure: I opened the letter and read it. It was infamous. It professed to interpret my opinions and gave as actual discoveries the atrocious conjectures of my brothers. . . . I shuddered, and was tempted to tear it up; but I remembered my exercise book and the road to Joux, and instead of disposing of it safely, or even of confiding it to my mother, I made a hole in a field at the foot of a hawthorn tree, and buried it there. Then I walked on seething.

Over against Laloge, I saw the trace of a woman's foot printed in the soft earth. . . . The turmoil of my rage abated, and I exclaimed: "What angel of heaven has just visited this desolate spot?" I quickened my pace: I ran, I flew. . . . In the valley of la Fontaine I saw a young girl ahead of me, a very Nymph for shape and lightness. I came up with her under my father's walnut trees, at the meeting of the three valleys. I looked at her, and she greeted me, blushing, by the name of Monsieur Nicolas. "But who are you, pretty traveller?" I asked. "I know you quite well," she answered, "but you do not remember me; I was too young when you left the neighbourhood. I am Marie Jeanne Lévêque of Laloge, and I am going to Sacy." Then I remembered her. Dear God, what winning candour, what grace, what shy simplicity and fragrant bloom! She was tall and womanly, though scarcely in her fifteenth year; her white dress and all about her was of an exquisite cleanliness after the manner of the pretty girls of Nitry. She enchanted me; yet I was not disloyal, for my mind turned immediately to my still lovelier Jeannette, more dainty, more nymph-like even than pretty Marie-Jeanne. Chatting to my attractive companion, I walked with her as far as the cut called *La Brêche*, which leads into the village on the Laloge side. I usually went to la Bretonne by way of the dykes. As we parted, Marie-Jeanne said she would be coming on to la Bretonne to greet my father from hers, and give him a message from the Courtenay people. (This use of the word *people* was customary in the country; children spoke of *our people* when alluding to their parents or their family.)

My mind was pleasantly occupied with Marie-Jeanne as I walked homewards. "I shall never win Jeannette," I thought, "better give up all hope of that. I will put away my books and turn farmer. Marie-Jeanne's father is rich, but he will think it an honour to be allied with mine. . . . She is a sweet girl, and will console me for Jeannette. I will settle down here in the country of my childhood, and work as my father has worked: then I can live at peace, undisturbed by plans, ambitions, or the travails of the mind." I felt an inner comfort and entered my father's house cheerfully, almost vexed with myself for not having brought my brothers' letter, as it would certainly have decided him to keep me. For it was of a kind to turn him as much against them as against me – and even more so, as they had the audacity to suggest that the trouble I caused him was a natural visitation on second marriages! Apparently there was some suspicion of what I had done, for my father asked if I had not brought a letter. "No, there is no letter, father," I answered coolly. My father smiled slightly, and said no more about the matter.

We had sat down to dinner and my mother was just serving the soup, when Marie-Jeanne came in, and was welcomed as the daughter of good friends, who always hailed our visits with delight. She was placed next to my mother, and I was by my father, so that we were facing each other. Her simple manners, her modesty, and her engaging voice which, by something clouded in its quality, suggested passion – these and her other charms had already bewitched me, and I hoped to fall in love with them: what is present to the senses has great power over the sixteen-year-old heart, especially when it is attractive. After dinner my mother took her to see the garden and the meadow. I went with them and showed Marie-Jeanne all the different trees I had planted since my childhood; for I loved doing things which were useful and would endure. Marie-Jeanne was kind enough to admire everything I had done, and to accept a posy of the prettiest flowers; also my mother seemed pleased by my attentions to her. For me it was a delightful evening, and so, I think, for little Lévêque; for she did not leave until she was obliged to do so in order to reach home before nightfall. I longed to be her escort, but this compliment is not customary in the country and would have made talk.

I stayed two whole days at home, leaving on the morning of the third. When I was saying goodbye to my mother, I confessed to having opened the letter, and told her what was in it. She promised to obtain my father's forgiveness, and added a little rebuke, tempering her words with a great gentleness. My father noticed us deep in conversation and, suspecting something, came up to us; and my mother, observing his smiling face, told him the truth, adding: "Could you have wished him to bring you all the dreadful things he knew were being said about him?" "It would at least have proved his faith in our affection, wife," returned this virtuous man. "And furthermore, to open letters with which one is trusted is a most dangerous thing to do and must never become a habit. Only the position in which Nicolas found himself could make me forgive such an action." I needed these words of encouragement, to hearten me and to prevent me from taking some imprudent step. I returned to Courgis full of the goodness of my parents, and firmly resolved to deliver anything that might be written another time.

As I walked up the valley of la Fontaine I was filled with joy; but when I reached the top of the hill from which one can see Laloge and Courtenay to the west, and Nitry to the east, I experienced that feeling of release described by travellers who have passed over the great mountain chains. Emotion overcharged my breast: I sang and I wept; my heart leapt for joy and melted into tenderness. Then my eyes turned earthwards; and I saw the print of Marie-Jeanne's foot. A gentler emotion mingled with my rapture, and I knelt and thanked God for granting an antidote to my despair at never seeing Jeannette again; for this thought terrified me. I walked on again and was already two hundred paces beyond Laloge when, at a turning where the hedge was high, I met Marie-Jeanne with her two brothers, Pascal and Georges, who were coming from Vauxgermains. Marie-Jeanne smiled and greeted me: "Have you been to see them at home?" she asked. "No: it is late, and I want to get to Courgis for dinner." "It is not nine yet," said one of her brothers, looking at his silver watch, "and it shall never be said that Monsieur Nicolas passed our door without coming in." Pascal took one arm and Georges the other and marched me back to Laloge. Marie-Jeanne, light as a young hind, ran on in front and, when I entered, a place was already laid for me.

M. Lévêque was like my father, and his wife was as good a woman as my mother; it was as though I were at home again, and I was touched by their welcome.* Mme Lévêque noticed this, and said: "I look on you as one of my own children, Monsieur Nicolas." "Would God I were!" I replied, and looked at Marie-Jeanne, who lowered her fine blue eyes (for she was a pretty blonde, just as Jeannette was the loveliest of brunettes). Pascal immediately raised his cup to me, saying: "So may it be!" (Marie-Jeanne was a dearly loved sister). "What do you mean, my boy, by saying *So may it be* to Monsieur Nicolas?" "I mean that I agree with what you have just said, Mother, and that I love Monsieur Nicolas neither more nor less than my brother Georges here . . . and I go bail he also likes you very much," he added, turning to me. "To the bottom of my heart," answered Georges, raising his cup to me, "and here's to your success in whatever you may desire." "Gently, my boys," said Père Lévêque looking at his sons, "I see what all you three have in your heads. But it is for fathers to arrange such things, and the children to carry them out." "Your father is right, children," said their mother. "But we are not in the least vexed by what has been said, Monsieur Nicolas, for you are the son of the most honoured and respected man in all the district; and if God wills that this should come to pass one day, neither of us will put anything in the way of it." I was confused but overjoyed: for Marie-Jeanne, covered with shy blushes, looked so attractive at that moment that I felt I was very lucky to have a chance of winning her. She seemed to me as desirable and beautiful as . . . Jeannette. I thanked her father and mother, and finally left at three o'clock in the afternoon, having stayed six hours – for they had detained me in the kindest way. I was escorted part of the way by the two brothers, who laughingly quoted the devil's remark in tales of sorcerers: *"I wish you back whence I took you."* I kissed Marie-Jeanne at the gate of the yard, and noticed that she did not turn away until the corner of the quick-set hedge round the meadow hid us from sight.

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*The Life of my Father is also, with a few changes in detail, the life of a thousand honest farmers in that district.

Pascal and Georges found a hundred nice things to say to me on the way, and I responded by begging them to foster their parents' affection for me, and their sister's. Pascal pressed my hand, saying: "Monsieur Nicolas, my brother Georges and I have only one desire: to be united with the two most respected families in the district, our worthy neighbours MM. de Courtenay (and of this we have some hope) and the Restifs of Sacy. Should this good fortune befall us, it would fulfil all our ambition. You can judge from this what we shall do." They insisted on taking me as far as Puits-Debond, recalling on the way various incidents in our boyhood when we went to school together under their relative, Maître Jacques. For Georges was little older than myself, and Marie-Jeanne was just my age; but as a child I had only noticed girls who were already developed; and had begun to make themselves attractive. I remembered all this as I chatted with the brothers, and not without great satisfaction! They left me at Puits-Debond, near the pond into which the spring empties. I had a little box of ivory and ebony with a silver hinge, which (I forgot to say) Marguerite gave me as a farewell present, and which I had always kept carefully concealed because of my brothers. I begged Pascal to give it to his sister from me. He took it readily, but only on condition that the first time I passed their door I should go in to receive a return pledge. And this I promised.

For the rest of the way, as far as M. Rousseau's poplars, I was drunk with joy. I had made up my mind to be a farmer, and had no regrets for either books or learning. I pictured with delight a patriarchal life like my father's and even began to make plans for organising my household. In common with everyone else, I knew what Marie-Jeanne's dowry should be. Also my half-brother, Boujat the surgeon, who had just married Mlle Patris at Ponthierry, had sold his estate to M. Lévêque for the sum of 6000 livres, and we had an interest in nearly the whole of this. The house where I was born was a part of it, so that when I married Marie-Jeanne I should find myself back on old ground, and could come to a favourable agreement with my father. The estate was worth much more than it was sold for, but money is so scarce in the country that Boujat had been delighted to get this sum in cash. [The estate is now, in 1784, worth 18,000 livres (and in 1793, 24,000 l.).] These thoughts filled my mind, and in place of my usual fantasies, my imagination fed upon realities. . . . At last I arrived at the valley of the poplars. Reader, I have never enjoyed half a day of unbroken happiness! I was going along, well content with my journey, with my excellent parents, with my lucky meeting with Marie-Jeanne, with her parents, with my plans; and looking on my happiness as so certain that nothing in the world could disturb it, when, on reaching the poplars, I saw Jeannette, with her mother and brother and little sister, on their way from visiting a hemp-field close to their meadow. I stopped, caught by surprise. I would have liked to turn and fly; but young Rousseau had seen me and hailed me. His mother and elder sister were walking in front, and he had the little girl by the hand. Ten paces ahead was my imperious Conqueror, and the Graces themselves were never so appealing, so fair. From time to time she would turn and smile at her brother – and I had never seen her smile before! My spirit flew to her, and my body half moved to follow; my heart melted like wax in a consuming fire, a fire burning in my breast, and never to be quenched. And yet I dared not speak to her; it was my fate never to say more than an indifferent word to her, my eyes downcast. On reaching the town Mme Rousseau and her daughter turned towards their house; I bowed to them silently, but not without confusion. Rousseau looked at me thoughtfully, and I think he read my heart; but he was not in a position to show the kindly frankness of the Lévêques. He left me and I entered the Presbytery.

My return was evidently a surprise, at least in so far as I came alone; for I was asked if my father was not with me. I replied that he would probably be coming shortly, but that he had not fixed a time. The vagueness of this answer satisfied my brothers, because it suggested that my father had held himself aloof from me. (I have been told that, as a young man, my father was much stricter with the children by his first marriage than he was with us, and I can well believe this as he was even gentler with my juniors than with me.) This was just the impression I wanted to give. In the evening, the curé made enquiries about my father's health and what he had said to me, in my presence but without addressing me personally: he spoke to the Abbé Thomas. . . . (No man over fifty of my acquaintance ever seems to realise that some day boys become men; just as such of the wealthy and noble as I have met never in all their lives seem to have the least idea that the poor are human beings with something more than instincts.) The Abbé replied from his own knowledge, or asked me some question, to which I replied briefly but without ill-humour. Save for the meeting by the poplars, I should have felt almost jovial, and might even have ventured on a jest; for having heard Boujat talk to my brother about the Turkish embassy in Paris, and describe our ambassador's reception at the Sultan's Court, I mentally compared my eldest brother to His Serene Highness, the abbé to the Dragoman, and myself to the ambassador. But I doubt if the joke would have been well received.

The day after my arrival everything went on as before, with this difference only, that I worked more strenuously in the garden by way of preparation for the arduous life of a farmer, which I had just decided to follow. The second day after my return is for ever memorable, for on it I spoke to Jeannette Rousseau. I was alone in the house: Sister Pinon had gone out, my two comrades were at the spring, the Abbé Thomas was in the garden, and the curé in his church. Jeannette knocked at the courtyard door. I was thinking of her at the moment: regret for my abandoned studies had again laid hold of me, and I was weeping. Hearing a knock, I wiped away my tears and went to the door. . . . My voice died on my lips; I reddened, I grew pale; my agitation was so great that I was obliged to lean against an elm tree that grew in the courtyard. Such was my declaration of love; such the language I spoke to my secret adoration. Jeannette smiled and blushed. How beautiful she was! . . . The music of her voice recalled my fugitive soul: "Monsieur," she said, "my father has sent me to ask whether Mlle de Courtives is with the curé to-day." "N . . . no, M . . . ademoiselle." I have never said more than these two words to her, the object of my most ardent love.* And even to address her thus: *Mademoiselle*, seemed to me a

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*See the sixteenth *Contemporaine*, entitled: *Le premier Amour,* which expresses a dream and a truth.

feat of daring. I shuddered at the first syllable: *Ma!* . . . it was too free. Ah, it is by such emotions, unknown to stagnant souls, that I realise how much I loved! Mlle Rousseau curtseyed, and went away without another word. I breathed again when she had left, and going outside, followed her with my eyes until the turning, wanting her to look back, and trembling lest she should do so. She did not turn, and I was cast down; yet if she had, it would have almost killed me. My imagination has always been fertile to conceive and quick to believe anything which might give me pain. As I was no longer given to study, I took it into my head that she knew this, and that that was why she went away so quickly, and never looked back (it would have been unseemly if she had). I told myself I was no longer worthy of her, and that her disdain was justified; for, in my opinion, to be prince would not have been too much before aspiring to Jeannette Rousseau's hand.

At this time, my brothers frequently sent me out on errands; partly to be rid of an object of detestation, whose time they could not so misuse without some feeling of shame, but partly to put me finally out of conceit with my life at Courgis. One of my journeys took me again to the house of M. Collet at Vermenton, with which we are already acquainted. I found Mme Collet surrounded by young people, among whom were two of her daughters; and these, seeing a great lout of a boy come in, his eyes fixed on the ground because he did not dare to look about him, and red to suffocation, began to chatter together: "Who can he be?" "He is one of the young Restifs of Sacy," Mme Collet told them. "He is living with his brother, our former *vicaire* and now curé of Courgis, a most worthy man." One of her daughters at once left the room, and I heard her speaking at a near-by door: "Come and see a pupil of the curé of Courgis." She came back and, in a little, was followed by Colette, or Mme *Parangon*.* Colette's face was serious as she entered, but broke into a smile on seeing me. She sat down and looked at me, as though expecting me to speak to her; but I did not dare. The young lady who had summoned Colette, called her two brothers also and the two clerks; and three big lads entered, who stared at me and sniggered. "What a boor!" "What a fool he looks!" said the two clerks. At these insolent remarks, I looked straight at them, and my colour had nothing to do with shyness. The elder son entered at that moment, and I accosted him easily, stating my business so clearly that the young man, who had heard nothing of what had passed, treated me with great respect. My behaviour impressed Mme Parangon; she dismissed her younger brother and the two clerks, saying to them: "If he were a fool he would not belong to that family." Then, turning to me with that gracious manner which was natural to her, she asked: "You are studying with your brothers, Monsieur Nicolas?" "I was, Mademoiselle," I replied, and I looked at her. . . . Great Heavens! The beauty of Jeannette: her person, the tones of her voice, her charm diffusing from the face! I began to tremble again. "You are shy with persons of my sex," continued Colette, "and I respect you the more for it." "Yes, Mademoiselle, I have the greatest reverence for your sex. . . ." Then, perceiving my two gentle clerks poking their noses round the door, I added: "But I am not afraid of people of my own age, and . . . I have sometimes knocked some sense into them. . . ." The lovely Colette laughed heartily, and called out: "Come here, my fine coxcombs." They came into the room, and I regarded them, but without anger. "He seems a good enough fellow," said one. "It's a pity he's shy with the ladies." "Why, isn't it the Monsieur Nicolas who was at school here?" said the other. "You were shy enough then." And turning to the others: "A market woman told me that, in his own village, he used to run away when the girls tried to kiss him." Everyone burst out laughing except my Colette. "It must be his piety," said Mlle Jacquette, Colette's younger sister. "Do you mean to say that if I tried to kiss you, you would run away?" asked one of the Campagnot girls. "Yes, he would," said one of the clerks before I could answer. "I do not believe it for a moment," said Mme Collet. "Pardon me, Madame," I replied, feeling somewhat more at home, "I certainly should. Any young lady who tried to kiss me would frighten me by her impudence." M. and Mme Collet and their eldest son seemed pleased with this answer, and Colette said to the two young men: "You are not equal to him, gentlemen!" Yet I left this house somewhat downcast, for the sight of Colette, who had been married without my hearing of it, only aroused painful emotions.

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*The word "Parangon" (the English "paragon") seems to have suggested itself to Restif, as a name to disguise the Fourniers, in part since in French it is a technical term in typography, and also because (as in English) it designates a precious stone of the first quality. Madame Parangon's Christian name was Marguerite; "Colette," following a not unusual method of designation, was a diminutive of her unmarried name, Collet, and would appeal to Nicolas by its suggestion of his own name. [Ed.]

I went back through Sacy, which meant lengthening my journey by a league and a half. I complained to my mother of the way I was treated at Courgis, and for the first time mentioned the *human* touch in the Abbé Thomas's behaviour with Sister Pinon. "My son," said this estimable woman, "bring all your own troubles to your mother, but never tell tales! If you only realised how hateful is the part of the informer! Try never to play it!" This was my reward for tale-bearing. I think, indeed I am sure, that these "human" touches were perfectly innocent, though I was cruel enough to make fun of this young man who was thwarting nature by his manner of life. My father, to whom I was careful not to say such things, told me that he would soon come and take me away; but he gave me to understand at the same time that he meant to send me to college at Auxerre, where I could lodge with M. Chambonnet, the dyer, and go to college with his son who was somewhat younger than myself. But nothing of all this took place.

One morning, some time after this journey, I saw my father arrive with three horses, from which I inferred that he had come to take me away. He greeted me coldly in front of my brothers, and then the three shut themselves up together in the curé's room. Now that my departure was certain I realised how happy I had been, despite my sufferings, in this town where I had met Jeannette and Marguerite. My heart swelled, and I could not restrain my tears; everything I looked at took on the tender colours of farewell.

I took advantage of my momentary freedom to say goodbye, not to my friends for I knew no one intimately at Courgis, but to the *Garenne* and the curial field, not forgetting the spot where I had conversed with Marguerite. The church I kept for my last farewell. I entered it trembling, my heart bursting with unshed tears and, kneeling down in Jeannette's place, kissed for the last time the unconscious stones her feet had trodden and the seat whereon she rested. I burst into tears, murmuring in passionate expostulation, my oft-repeated prayer: "*Unam petii a Domino! . . . sed nunquam mihi continget.*" They sought for me everywhere: Melin, my remaining companion (for Huet had just been sent away to Paris, where he lived in wretched poverty; Melin himself was later transported to the Islands, and he deserved it. What a splendid thing, to be educated by men devoted to religion! I was the most rebellious, and remained the least perverse!), Melin, I repeat, found me with my face buried in the dust. Poor simple-minded child,* he was touched at finding me in tears, and knelt on the ground beside me. "Go," I said, "and I will follow." He ran off to tell what he had seen, and his story made a prodigious impression, not only on my brothers but upon my father himself; for, not knowing my secret, they attributed my state entirely to religion. When I returned I saw astonishment in every face; for my reddened eyes bore witness to the truth of Melin's story. "Where have you been?" they asked. "To say my goodbyes." "To whom?" "To the church; and to the places I shall never see again!" And I wept. *The curé*: "Who told you you were never coming back?" "No one: but I saw the three horses." "A sound inference," he said smiling. "My dear brother," he added a moment later, "I told you once that you were all sparks and no fire; I confess now I was mistaken, and if you wished, you could become a redoubtable Christian; you have all the qualities for it. But here there are stumbling-blocks in your path; and we must not expose you to them longer." "There is only one," I replied in a low voice, "and that would not exist if I had ability, a little money, and a few more years. . . . But the difference is too great." I fell silent, and they tried to make me explain. "I should like to, but I feel it would be impossible." And I said nothing more, for my father did not think it wise to force me. We had dinner and departed.

I walked by myself the whole way home. My father, wisest of men, saw that I must not be constrained. I went through the woods, I passed by Laloge, without even thinking of Marie-Jeanne; it was not until I was in my father's house that I remembered her. "Alas," I cried sorrowfully, "I love Jeannette, and Jeannette only."

*Melin did not become utterly corrupt until after I had left, at least so the chaplain told me, who did not altogether approve of my brothers' system. Also Melin knew nothing of my aberrations, I was too discreet; but the Abbé Thomas may have spoken of them after I left.

None the less, my intention was to become attached to Marie-Jeanne, and to let absence bring forgetfulness of Jeannette Rousseau. It was autumn; and while I was trying to break myself to farm work, my father, who had quite other plans, went to Auxerre, without saying anything to me, and made arrangements with Chambonnet. My mother also made a journey to Auxerre to buy me books, such as Joubert's and Boudot's Dictionaries, the *Gradus ad Parnassum*, my beloved *Terence*, for which I begged most earnestly, *Justin, Virgil* and several others. Thus I used my hands for work and my head for recreation. I broke my back threshing with the threshers, doing everything they did except winnow. In winter we cleared a piece of waste ground for vines; I went with the labourers, and took my strip with the others, and stuck to it all day. By the end of a week I felt nothing could tire me, I, who before had tired after ten minutes' hard work. They did not interfere with me at home, expecting me to weary of the life. They were wrong; my mind was made up. And yet I spent every evening as well as Sundays and holidays at my books. The excellent health I enjoyed, until I was broken by violent shocks of two different kinds, is certainly due to this eight months of work in the open.

I could not forget Jeannette: though I had no suspicion of it, her memory was immortal; but I wanted to love Marie-Jeanne. Every Sunday when she came with her family to Mass, I used to invite them to have dinner with us, and they often accepted. But as they had many near relatives at Sacy, and also had furnished the house which they had bought from my brother Boujat, they did not always do so, but would take me with them instead. On one such occasion, Pascal made his sister give me the return pledge for which I had hesitated to ask. From that day I considered myself engaged, and compelled to renounce Mlle Rousseau. We were always left alone together between dinner and Vespers: I was fond and tender, and Marie-Jeanne even more so.* At last, to pledge myself irrevocably, I wanted . . . to treat her as my wife. . . . She hardly even demurred. What delights, O Fount of Life, you have contrived in the union of man with woman. For six months, from November to the end of April 1751, I was as happy as the memory of Jeannette would allow; then everything changed. . . . During the winter my father always had a good deal of business with contracts, for it was the time of marriages and sales, and he used me to do the copying. I was glad to act as his clerk, so that the neighbourhood might get used to me, as his successor. But in the meanwhile, as we drew towards Lent, my father went to see M. Chambonnet, who had put off taking me till that time. As M. de Caylus was in residence at the episcopal palace, my father, after he had finished with M. Chambonnet, went to pay his respects to the chief ecclesiastic, who spoke of my brothers in the highest terms. Then my future was discussed. The prelate was not in favour of continuing my education, and advised my father to abandon this plan and teach me a trade. Edme Restif returned in a state of great indecision, and very much vexed with himself for having visited the palace at all!

While he was hesitating, time, which pauses never, spread its wings and followed its quick flight. The first of May 1751 arrived. To go against the bishop was to make an enemy for me. To waste my youth and make a peasant of me was an idea which neither of my parents could accept. My father bore in mind the advice of his sister Madelon, whom he so justly

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*A puppy of an abbé, named Simon, who was given my little romance, *La Confidence Nécessaire,* to censor, wanted the manuscript suppressed on the grounds that no girls like *Alice* and *Betty* existed. My dear abbé, or rather canon, now, of Saint-Quentin, I was telling my own story: Betty was Marie-Jeanne; Alice, Julie – Jeannette, Marguerite, all were women I have loved. It is a case of the Athenian jester and the pig over again.

respected: "Look after my nephew Nicolas," she had said over and over again. "He is not the sort of boy to keep in an out-of-the-way corner. Educate him, and he will fly higher than your other two sons; at least if no one clips his wings!" And he also remembered M. Jean Restif's opinion. My mother, on her side, recalled the words of her estimable father, Nicolas Ferlet. "If you take care of that boy, he will do credit to his father's name, and to ours; he will be a glory to all of us, for he loves his kin with a passion that I have found in no other child of my acquaintance." And, on his deathbed, the good old man had repeated these words. So it was that neither my father nor my mother could entertain the idea of making me a farmer. While they were bestirring themselves and turning this way and that, chance, or rather the interest I had aroused in Mme Parangon on the visit which I have described, offered an unexpected opening.

Before speaking to me about it, my father said to me one day: "Well, Nicolas, how do you like farm work?" "It is hard, father, but I shall get used to it." "It is not worth while; for I have no intention of keeping you in this out-of-the-way corner." "Oh father, but now I like your work better than anything else." "But I do not like it for you. Am I to be guided by the opinions of my first family when they are to the disadvantage of the second? No, you are all my children: I love you equally, and forgive you equally. Ah, who should forgive you if not your father, Nicolas? My son, I am not going to reproach you for past misconduct. You are suffering for it, and I never blame an action which carries its own punishment. Your elder brothers were ready to push on your education; they had already secured M. de Caylus's consent for you to complete it at the Seminary: instead of which, through your own fault, they have succeeded in stopping it altogether. My father, God rest his soul!" (and he uncovered) "would not have spoken either to his elder or his younger children with the moderation I have used; you would have trembled before him, and even a little mischief would have been severely punished. Who would have dared resist him? His paternal authority was like the power of God himself (if the comparison is allowed) and he governed us with his thunder. . . . But I lack the strength for this, as I lack his resolute and noble character, and his talents. He was harsh, God bless him! for as his wisdom was greater than mine, I have always loved and respected him the more for it.* I go by a different road because I am incapable of following his; each man must act according to his nature. . . . Once my father found out that I had taken a posy to a girl in Nitry. He said nothing to me, but on Monday morning, when I had already mounted one of the horses to go to the plough, he asked me for my whip, and gave me three cuts with it which tore through shirt and flesh. Then he returned it, saying to himself: 'Now then, go courting!' I could not act so, my son. But I warn you at once that you must not think of taking a wife until you are a man and can support her. Marie-Jeanne is a good girl; but she is very young, and so are you. As I have no intention of keeping you on the land, but mean to apprentice you to some craft or business in Auxerre, or even in Paris – but I incline to Auxerre – a day will come when you will not find all that you need in a village girl; for I have been in towns and am acquainted with their manners, and know how far these are removed from village ways. And now you must know that M. Ladrée, bailiff of Vermenton, spoke to us the other day about M. Parangon, printer at . . ., and

*Great God, what a son! . . . Dear readers, it was Pierre Restif, whom many among you may have blamed without reflection, that formed his character. And this son brought up his children in your way: you have read his life; you are reading theirs. Then judge him and judge them; judge Pierre Restif – judge yourselves!

we are thinking of putting you with him. He is married to the daughter of a friend so you will be well treated; and it is an honourable profession in which what you have learnt will not be wasted. My child, you seem to like country life; but, apart from your having three brothers and three sisters younger than yourself (not to mention the elder ones), I do not consider you strong enough for a life that proved too arduous for my father and has broken me before my time. Therefore I shall do for you what I wish had been done for me; for I should have been happier in the town with that Mlle Pombelins of whom you have heard me speak. Some day you will find as good a match, or nearly so, if you behave well. You have seen the youngest of Mme Parangon's sisters? She will be much richer than the others; she is beautiful and, more important, well brought up, and I have reason to think that you may hope to win her, supposing you do sufficiently well. Therefore, my child, think no more of the country. I am a father, and must use such foresight as I have to guide my children and give them the station most suitable to them. Any ability you have would be useless, or nearly useless, in a village: students and thinkers leave their fields untilled when they grow weary of labour, whereas in the town, these very qualities will help you. That is what has decided me. If, with your love of the country, you had the constitution of your brother Baptiste, you should have stayed in the village and married from the district – Marie-Jeanne, if you were going to live at Sacy; your cousin Simon, if you went to Nitry: I should have guided you to the best of my ability, for such time as is left to me here on earth, and you might have made a good householder. But you know what Lawyer Restif* said of me, and I have always remembered his words. I followed his advice in my own case, and I shall follow it also in yours. My excellent sister (God preserve her) has always warned me not to keep you in a village, and Nicolas Ferlet said the same. I cannot go against my own convictions and the advice of my most respected relatives by blood and marriage. For my relative M. Droin of the Villages, says the same as do the others; we shall be going to see him before you leave. Therefore you must choose a career suitable to your abilities. Your elder brothers misjudged you, and the abler of them practically admitted this. They mistook a mere ebullition of the senses for vice, and they were wrong. Your father judges you better. But give up your village sweethearts (I know you have more than one); such childish trifling will only do you harm. Not that I despise your friends: they are good and virtuous girls. But you are not a hard enough worker, or if you have the necessary energy, you have not the strength to be the head of a family in the country. Be guided by your father's experience. I have seen young people like you marry, come to ruin, and languish in poverty after some show of courage. I respect Marie-Jeanne and Mlle Jeannette Rousseau more than I can say. I am better acquainted with them than you are, through others who have

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*See Vol. I, p. 196; but this is what he said as my father told it to me the second time. ". . . with whom I was clerk a year and two winters. It was he who decided me to take to

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agriculture, to which I had become accustomed before going to Paris. 'Restif,' he said to me, 'you have plenty of commonsense and not much brain. You have no turn for my profession, but I could make an honest lawyer of you and you would starve to death. I am as fond of you, for your name's sake, as of Charruat d'Aigues-mortes and even fonder, though he is my cousin-german and you only the son of a cousin-german. But Charruat has what you have not. And you may be the happier for this, so do not envy your cousin. If you took after your father, I should know at once what to do: I have two young sons and you know how I love them as a father. I should put you to learn with them and to direct them, and to be their guide and their example; and I would promise that whatever I did for them as their father, I would do for you also. And perhaps some day you would bring great honour to my name. . . . But waste no time in dreams of fame: an honourable career is all you can hope for, and honour without fame is worth a hundred times more than fame without honour.' That is what the worthy lawyer Restif said to me."

reason to know them well. Would to God you had a rich inheritance! Then I should say: choose that one of them which is nearest to your heart; for with a wife who is beautiful and pious and good, all goes well. But if your career lies in the town, you must take a town girl to wife. Moreover other openings may occur, such as the one I have just found for you, and of which we have some hope. For it seemed as though M. Ladrée were speaking on behalf of Mme Parangon, the other day when you were at Laloge. . . . She had heard from M. Gallereux, surgeon at Courgis, that you were no longer with your brothers and, out of friendship for the family, asked M. Ladrée to speak to us, with the idea that you might enter her husband's profession. She saw you at Vermenton, the day when you went to see M. Collet concerning some letters and to speak to her eldest brother; and she formed a good opinion of you, although certain young ladies who were present and the two clerks, Monestot and Mogeot, made fun of you because you were shy and nervous. But I commend this in you: assurance should not come too soon, and intelligence can be gauged by self-distrust. Your brother Baptiste, a happy-go-lucky youngster, is bold through good-nature or a thick head, and your sister Geneviève through vanity; she has been spoiled by too much praise when young, and I have small hopes of her brain. But you are bashful, partly through inexperience and partly because you know you lack capacity and knowledge, attainments and fine clothes. Am I not right?" "Yes, father," I answered, seeing he expected a reply. "Then I tell you to overcome this bashfulness in the only way you can: that is by acquiring all that you lack. . . . So we will take the first free day to visit my good friend the notary at Vermenton and meet his son-in-law, M. Parangon, who is coming to stay with him for the marriage of Mlle Jacquette, the second daughter. That leaves only Mlle Fanchette, who is four or five years younger than you. I speak to you as a father and friend, not as a master; because you are grown up now and can think for yourself. Therefore you will understand when I tell you that before you take a sweetheart you must have a profession, and before you can think of making her your wife you must have bread. We are not children of kings and nobles whose only care, after sixteen, is to get children to eat the bread ready for them in the oven. We have to earn ours, but that is nothing to grumble about. The workers make the State, which the rich govern; without us, whom would they govern? However great the noble, he lives by the work of our hands; and if his dazzling opportunities bring him glory, we humble ones have the no less solid honour of being useful. So, my son, never be ashamed of working in the estate to which God has called you; but blush for yourself indeed, nay, die of shame, if you ever live by scheming at the expense of others. But that would be foreign to your character. . . . When I was at Paris, in the office of my attorney, M. Molé, I made it a rule to do everything that came to hand, and I was liked. My fellow workers made fun of me at first, and I felt this, for our family is not thick-skinned. But I waited a favourable opportunity and gave them help when they needed it, and afterwards I heard one say to the other: 'Do you know what Restif did for me?' 'Yes, I saw it.' 'What do you think of him?' 'The lad improves on acquaintance.' 'Yes,' said the head clerk, who was an intelligent man and valued me, 'but he had to do you a good turn before you noticed it! When he was only doing things for Monsieur or Madame or Mademoiselle Molé, or for myself, and you got nothing out of it, his kindness was "servility"; it only becomes kindness when *you* get the benefit!' His words took effect and I was liked by my fellow clerks. In the town, dear child, do the same when you have the chance: for it is beautiful and a consolation to imitate a father in well-doing. You have heard a thousand times how good and how much loved was your mother by everyone with whom she came in contact, and whatever her position, and this, in her girlhood, was by no means always pleasant. For she lost her mother, and her father was ruined. The poor are at the mercy of everyone. You know how impatient she is? Yet she was so sweet-tempered that it was just for her own merits that Mme Boujat, the first wife of her first husband, wanted to have her. This proves that to be willing is a good recipe for conduct and one well worth using. Nothing is base except taking pride in being useless. . . . When your master gives you an order, his tone will vary according to what it is. If it is to do some humble, menial task, he will put it as a request, because he knows you are not a servant. Will you refuse? No, because it is a favour to a friend. But if it concerns one of your duties as pupil or apprentice, he will order you, and by no means gently; then it would be wrong to refuse because that would be contrary to all discipline. Therefore whatever you may be asked to do, never refuse; and each duty will be ennobled by the thought: 'My master is the representative of my parents; and would I not do it for them?' So much for general principles. With Mme Parangon, my friend's daughter, you will not have to put up with the outrageous humiliations, so often the lot of a prentice in the town. Nevertheless, you must be prepared for anything, and remember that the time of apprenticeship will pass, leaving no trace of servile offices; only in what concerns you as a man must you sustain the dignity of your manhood and do nothing that may derogate from it, for that estate is permanent. Therefore be good and prudent, son Nicolas, and have no thoughts but to perfect yourself in the craft of printing from the time you enter it. For, if I know anything about it, it is a high and noble calling, in which you may gain much useful knowledge. And may God preserve you in his holy fear, my child, that you may never do anything in your life that is not for the good of your fellowmen; and may He withhold all evil from you. And a father's blessing be upon you: may God bless you and keep you always in his ways. May his holy angel lead you as he led the young Tobias, and may his sacred law be ever present in your mind and never fade from your heart and memory. Amen."

Such were the wise counsels of my father, which I have faithfully and scrupulously recorded word for word, for they have never left my mind, though they have sometimes taken flight from my heart.

From the day following I gave up agricultural work. I took up my studies again with the help of those books which my mother had brought me from Auxerre. In addition I had Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and I set myself to translate this, as I was devouring my Terence in the translation which faced the text. However I helped my mother in the garden when at leisure, and worked about the poultry-yard without shame, now that I could no longer hope to be a real farm labourer. But I was sad. I had only managed to forget Jeannette by turning my mind to Marie-Jeanne. This sweet girl's brothers did not neglect me, but came every Sunday to pass away some time with me. They were always welcomed in our house as friends, and my father's courtesy convinced them that there would be no opposition to their cherished plan. I often walked home with them after supper, and they in turn would take me back as far as *la Fontaine* where we parted. Marie-Jeanne, shy and sensitive, held herself aloof, for we talked little to each other after the matter of which I have spoken, and her parents thought the better of me for this reserve. Her mother especially loved me dearly, proving it again and again. . . . Blessed be your memory, kind and virtuous woman!

Why was I forced to bring unhappiness upon your darling daughter? I ask forgiveness of you both for all your sufferings! My father knew everything that had happened, save in one particular; he knew I was beloved, and it was this that made him hasten my departure for the town. O Marie-Jeanne! You have been well avenged!

Two days after my father's exhortation, he and my mother took me to Colette's father in Vermenton to introduce me to M. Parangon. I felt very shy, but all the bustle of marriage preparations made things easier for me. I was introduced to Mlle Fanchette, and my father's hints prevented me from behaving as childishly as I generally did with town girls. Fanchette was twelve years old, and I thought her very pretty! Colette appeared almost immediately with five or six other girls: a wide-awake little Parisian, a girl from Auxerre of imposing aspect, and the rest from the neighbourhood. As my eyes fell on Mme Parangon I experienced all those emotions that Jeannette had inspired, with desire added thereto. My heart flew out to her. My idea of happiness and the thought of being subject to her in her house fused and became one in my mind. She looked at me, and because those lovely eyes had gazed upon me, my whole existence was ennobled. God! How queenly, yet how kind! I forgot Marie-Jeanne, and all those others who had merely roused desire; but I joined Jeannette to the heavenly image that was being graven on my heart. I trembled with delight. Nothing could abash me now save the fear of displeasing her, and I behaved with a manliness and good sense that astonished my parents, surrounded as I was by young ladies! Only the Parisian disconcerted me a little by her too bold glances and equivocal questions. I blushed and lowered my eyes (than which nothing could have been more to my advantage). The young people laughed at me, but Mme Parangon said to them in a low voice: "If you are proof against that, I know not what to think of you! Perhaps you too will writhe one day beneath the sarcasm of some coxcomb!" Then M. Parangon came in and I was introduced to him. Judging by the manner induced by his wife's presence, he put my age at twenty-three; he was assured that I was only sixteen and a half. My conversation, all that I said or did, had taken on a certain gravity: in a moment, by one glance from her eyes, Colette had made a new man of me. Happy and fatal passion, was it love? or some yet more noble sentiment? . . Reader, you shall judge for yourself; and I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that you are to hear things that will astonish you. M. Parangon accepted me and fixed the time of my coming for July.

On my return to Sacy, there was no need of further exhortation to make me fall in with my parents' plans. Aware that I should need Latin and Greek, I was working at these without master or help of any kind, when M. Antoine Foudriat came to see us. He looked at my work and we talked about it. Then he embraced me, and put all his knowledge and his library at my disposal. I spent a part of every day with him and made rapid progress; and, with the help of this good priest, who had known me from infancy, I was able, in less than six weeks, to speak conversational Latin in the easy, fluent style I have always retained. He only gave me a smattering of Rhetoric, and of what are called the *humanities*, at the same time consoling me for what I did not know of bad Physics, and bad Theology, by demonstrating their uselessness. "You can study Physics in the great book of Nature, and by mixing with men who are learned in it; and by reading the latest books on the subject to which you will have access as a printer. You already know more Theology than a Dominican from your reading of the Bible; but you are acquainted with the Fathers also and you do not forget what you have once learned. Waste no more time in regrets for seminary or college. You hold the key to knowledge and can enter when you will." These wise words were more valuable than any academic learning; they brought me comfort and contentment, and put me under an unending obligation to wise Antoine Foudriat. He had faith as the *Vicaire Savoyard* had faith, for I sketched him as he was in the *École des Pères.** How worthy of respect he was, and how respected! To my dying breath I shall bless his name.

My father had promised to take me to the *Villages de la Rivière* before my departure, to see our cousin Droin and some other connections on the distaff side in the same district; for it was the cradle of our family, and there was still a Droin who bore the surname of one of our ancestors, *the Just.* This man had twelve children, six boys and six girls, all of them tall and well made, and all deeply attached to each other; their mother had nursed every one of them herself and had never lost a single child. It was the finest family I have ever seen. We had other connections at the *Villages*, descendants of Restif surnamed *Tintamarre*, and the girls of this family were married to the most respected people in the neighbourhood. Droin the Just was descended through his great-great-grandmother from Restif the Just.

A few days before the one chosen by my father for this visit, a big man in a red cloak, and mounted on a tall, heavily built black horse passed along the Nitry road. My father was at the window and I was working at the table. "There is my cousin Droin!" he exclaimed. "I know him by his cloak and the gait of his heavy black horse." He went out to meet him, beckoning me to follow. My cousin had not seen me for six years, that is, since I was a child; but he had always shown almost as much affection for me as dear aunt Madelon. We joined him about thirty paces from the farm gate and helped him to dismount. He embraced my father, and then asked, looking at me: "And who is this big fellow?" "This is my son Nicolas." I had just taken his horse's bridle, and lowered my eyes, blushing. "A shy maid rather, cousin," said the old man. "Come here, young Restif. . . . I like his modesty. It was the usual thing for boys of his age to be shy in my young days! He brings them back again and makes me happy!" and tears came to his eyes. He said many pleasant things to me and, having got me to talk, turned to my father: "He will be more like his family, cousin, even than your eldest son, of whom, for all your modesty, you are so proud. But from the little he has just said, I know he will never be rich. You are right to send him to a town. I see in his eyes a something superior to the country-folk, which makes me think he would be out of place among them." [I only repeat this conversation to show how much reason my dear father had for not letting me settle down as a peasant; for, alas, I have no right to pride myself on a prophecy which I never fulfilled!] My father and mother (for we had reached the house) were overjoyed to hear such words from a relative well known for his sagacity and excellent judgment, and one who had been described as the *last survivor of the patriarchal age.* The old man chatted on. "I could almost believe it was Pierre; those are his eyes, with the sly glint in them. I well remember the day he read his genealogy to some gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who had said in his presence: 'You commoners scarcely know who your grandfathers were. Nobility is something to be proud of, if only because a gentleman preserves the memory of his ancestors and their deeds.' 'Although a commoner,' returned Pierre Restif, 'if I am one, I know a great deal about my ancestors for the last sixteen hundred years.' His guests at table (for he entertained anyone who cared to eat with him) stared at him in astonishment. It looked very much as if he had had to listen to the same sort of remark before, for he had made his preparations. He was certainly a most witty man! . . . He opened the chest wherein he stored official documents, and took out an old parchment, very much rat-eaten but still legible, and written in Gothic character for the first ten or twelve centuries, and for the next four in a script which approximated by little and little to our own. 'Here is my genealogy from the emperor *Restif*,' he said. 'The Emperor Restif!' interrupted a councillor of the Parliament of Dijon. He burst out laughing, and the others joined in. 'That is ludicrous!' they said. 'Not altogether, gentlemen,' replied Pierre gravely. 'The councillor does not recognise the Emperor because I gave the French version of his name; if I had said the Emperor *Pertinax*, which is the same word in Latin, you would have known it at once.' Thereupon he opened a great book – wait, like those," and he pointed to my dictionaries. "Perhaps the word is there?" I found it at once, which much impressed my father and the old man who had no scholarship, and could not understand how, in the twinkling of an eye, I had found *Pertinax* in my *Boudot*. They put on their spectacles, and read after me: *Pertinax, rétif, entêté, têtu, qui ne lâche pas. . . .* "It was that very book, or one like it that Pierre produced," continued the old man. "And immediately the Councillor, a relative, through Anne-Marguerite Simon, of your mother, became serious, and the others stopped laughing too. Then, in that impressive manner he could assume at ease, Pierre read his Genealogy, which I expect you know?" "Here it is, written in his own hand, or rather in mine," said my father, "because I wrote the whole of it to his dictation." M. Droin looked at it, and said: "It is the same, I recognise it. All the gentlemen followed as Pierre Restif read, and knew not what to say; for the parchment was certainly old, and the writing not only looked old but changed in style and in the ink used from age to age. They saw first an Emperor, then the son and daughter of Emperors, and then other great persons among those who followed after. . . . But let my little cousin read it to us; I should enjoy hearing again this monument to the wit and gaiety of a good friend and relative, and, in his time, the most courteous and agreeable copesmate in the countryside." "He shall do so directly after dinner."

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*I have reprinted this portrait of him at the end of Vol. II of the *Vie de Mon Père.*

And during dessert I read the Genealogy exactly as I have given it in the introduction.

When I had finished, I was myself so astonished by it that M. Droin said laughing: "Well, there should be some truth in it, because my little cousin saw for himself that *Pertinax* means *Restif*; and I have heard my grandparents, both on my father's and my mother's side, say the Restifs used to be called *Petinax*, which is like enough to Pertinax. Another version of our name was Rectif, which means *upright man* and *friend of justice*; but this beautiful name had too scholarly a sound for the people, and was corrupted by their custom of calling it Rêti, and by the habit you all have of signing it Rétif, cutting out the *c* or the *s*. But," he added genially, "it cannot all be true. It is the jest of a witty man. . . . And here is his grandson. May he live longer than the forty-two years which was Pierre's age when he died!" As he said this tears came into his eyes. And tears flowed unheeded down my father's cheeks, as he sat in silence with uncovered head, offering that tribute of reverence which he never failed to pay when he or anyone else mentioned his honoured father. [For myself, I was forty-nine when I wrote this, in December 1783, forty-nine and six months when I copied it on June 3, 1784, and fifty-eight years and nine months on this 10th of August, 1793, when printing it. I am already sixteen years and nine months older than was my grandfather: I am not worthy to live longer than did my excellent father.] "You are right to send him to the town," resumed my cousin, speaking of myself, "for there he may succeed beyond our hopes and do credit to the family from which he springs, and to which I have the advantage of being doubly related, through my great-great-grandfather and through my dear and virtuous mother, Brigitte Restif, of whom Madeleine Restif, your sister, is the very image." At the mention of his mother he could not restrain his tears; they flowed majestically down his venerable cheeks, while his eyes raised to heaven and his moving lips showed that this devoted son was invoking his dead mother. "Your wise remarks, cousin," said my father at last, "confirm me in my decision; and if my sons at Courgis make any difficulties I will overcome them." "It is sometimes a fine thing, cousin," replied the old man, "for a father to listen to the well-reasoned arguments of a prudent son; but I can see no prudence here; and my advice is not to keep Nicolas in the country. And before he leaves for the town, I hope you will bring him to Annet-la-Rivière and the adjacent villages, to make the acquaintance of his father's family on the distaff side; for he cannot love people he does not know. I should especially like him to meet my poor eldest daughter, who is paralysed* and cannot come here; also his cousin, rightly called *the Just*, and his twelve children; for these are people well worth knowing." "I promise," answered my father pressing his hand.

Thus were my revered parents confirmed in a plan with which they had been pleased enough before. My father and I went to the Villages the

*This cousin of mine had a sparkling wit though she had been paralysed for more than thirty years. She was beauty, sweet propriety and goodness personified. Her charm rose triumphant above this half-death and she was the soul of the household. The table was always laid by her bedside and she enchanted the guests whom her father often brought to the house.

following week. I saw my paralysed cousin, and her brother. He was as shy as I was myself and even more so, but in him it was a mental twist caused by a love affair with a girl whom his father would not let him marry. The sight of this young man did much to cure me; he aroused my pity. . . . We were received by the elder M. Droin and had supper with him, and I saw a more interesting phenomenon than the invalid *Scarron*: a girl of thirty, paralysed from the knee downwards, including the joint, but otherwise fresh and beautiful, gay, entertaining and witty. . . . After supper she took my hand; no one was near us. She gazed at me in silence; I blushed and lowered my eyes. After a few seconds she drew me to her and kissed me. I trembled. "Little cousin, I have just looked into your heart," she said. "Remind me some day to tell you a secret which concerns you. It would be too soon now; your senses are as alert as your glance is modest. From what I can see you will make or mar the lives of three women, if worse does not befall: for your heart is on fire and others will take fire from it. Already one of the three will never marry . . . go now, for we only share the honour of your visit, and others are to provide your bed." She referred to Droin *the Just*.

Old M. Droin himself escorted us to his cousin-german. "One must be just with the just," he said to the younger man. "I do not want to take sole possession of our common relatives, who bear the name we all revere. I bring them to you that you may shelter them to-night and to-morrow give them breakfast with all your numerous family. For it is befitting that members of an honourable family should know each other." At these words, Droin the Just (I seem still to see his noble face, kindly and grave) advanced towards my father, took his hand, and then embraced him, saying: "Be very welcome! It is a proud day indeed when I receive Pierre Restif's son and grandson into my house!" And as he finished speaking, he embraced me too; then turning to his wife: "My dear Brigitte," he said, "call our sons and daughters so that they may see our dear cousin Restif of Sacy and the eldest son by his second wife, Barbe Ferlet of Bertrô." After she had welcomed my father and kissed me, the good woman called her children; they all made haste to answer her summons, including the eldest, a surveyor and thirty years old, who arrived first with a pen still in his mouth, for he had been working. "You wanted me, mother?" he said. And then, catching sight of my father, he went straight up to him and, which astonished me, greeted him in the very words his father had used, only substituting "us" for "me." He added: "And Edme is as good a man as Pierre, for all Pierre's distinction." (Then to me) "You come of two worthy and honourable men, cousin; you cannot help being like them." At which the elder M. Droin said quickly: "I tell you, Charles, Nicolas will be the very image of Pierre." "I accept what you say without question or further scrutiny, cousin, because I know you are an excellent judge." (Here he paid a double compliment, as the old man was judge of Annet and the annexed villages.) "Why are not the sons of Lawyer Jean Restif of Noyers with us on this happy day," continued the old man. "He was worthy of our name," replied Droin the Just, "but perhaps his sons of Vienne and Grenoble are too prosperous to enjoy such family gatherings." (It is from scenes such as these, Reader, that I have drawn what in my books has been found true to life: here are my models.)

After this I was introduced to the rest of the family: the grown-up daughters, amiable and unassuming girls, kissed me, but the younger ones were too shy to come near. How their simple bashfulness would have astonished Paris, where the youngest girls have the most assurance! But we got a little more used to each other next day at breakfast. . . . Not to omit an incident typical of country manners: the daughters of the house cleaned our shoes when we were out of the way; my sisters did the same at home for my father's guests, whether kinsmen or friends. I returned well content with our visit. My father too had been pleased with me, for he told my mother so privately on our return; but I already knew it from the intimacy with which he had talked to me. He told me that a marriage between the paralysed girl and the Abbé Thomas had been suggested, so that the name of Restif might be brought back to the Villages; but the Abbé made it a condition that a vow of chastity should be taken by both parties, and M. Droin refused this as a kind of sacrilege. The matter never came up again, as Thomas went to Paris, etc. When my mother congratulated me on my behaviour I replied that I was never shy or unsociable with people who liked me.

My mother and I went again to Vermenton a short time before my departure for the town, and she bought me a very neat brown suit, silk stockings, the best I had ever had, a hat and town shoes. For my linen, she thought it enough to make me cuffs with muslin ruffles, which could be fastened to my plain shirts for Sundays and holidays. When everything was ready, it was decided that I should not go and say goodbye to my brothers; they disapproved of my apprenticeship (of which they had heard from Michel Linard) even though it was my father's idea. I left early in the morning of the fourteenth of July, with my Aunt Mairat's ass to carry the luggage. My kind aunt was to fetch the donkey next day, to carry back the things which she was in the habit of buying in town.

The evening of my departure I went to see M. Antoine Foudriat who had baptised me, to say goodbye to him and to thank him. He gave me some excellent advice; for he had always been fond of me, although he had had to conceal his affection from Mme Rameau to avoid jealousy. I had the satisfaction, now that I was grown up, of seeing that he thought much more of me than of the young Rameaus, whose denseness disheartened him. He had been educated in Paris, at the College of Sainte-Barbe; so he knew the capital, and the ways of the world, and could talk to me of towns from his own experience.

"My dear Nicolas," he said, "you will have to be suave and courteous and patient where you are going. A town is not like a village where everyone frankly speaks his mind. You must learn to disguise what you think, for others will do the same with you from the beginning, in spite of your insignificance. You must learn to swallow insults; for you will certainly get them, if only because you come from the country and lack the vices of your comrades. But stand firm and guard your virtues; for when you have got accustomed to society and its ways, these will lose their crudeness and thus become acceptable to your fellows, and you will be respected for them. I know you well enough to be sure that at first you will be disgusted with everything you see. And this impression is the right and true one: hold fast to it. Later you will fall under the spell; then, I warn you, your judgments will be false. It is at first that you will see things as they really are. The beginnings of a new life are dangerous and deceitful, because the more we shape ourselves to the ways of the town, the more admirable we find these, and there is the greatest danger of mistaking vices for mannerisms and things that one must do or have in a town. But this illusion will vanish with familiarity; and with your cast of mind I am certain that at the end of six years you will despise all the things that six months hence you will be admiring. But take care while the enchantment lasts, for it lasts a long time! If you pass safely through this critical period, so fatal to most young men, I stand surety to you for yourself. My object in telling you this is that you may know in advance what you could only find out for yourself too late. As an apprentice you will be subject, not to your master only, but to the workmen, until you have served your time; therefore be humble, for only so will you escape humiliation in your work and from your fellow-workers. Keep ahead of time and make a habit of doing everything that it is usual for an apprentice to do with zeal and punctuality. Your diligence will have this advantage: there will be nothing of servility in your obedience. Make yourself liked from the beginning, so that everyone may be disposed to ease your position. It is hard to overcome prejudice, and if you are once disliked, you will suffer for it a long time. You will not find all your duties irksome; for you know that they will come to an end. Moreover you can look forward to being obeyed in your turn, so that, to support the authority of the workmen, is really as much to your interest as to theirs, as well as avoiding any bad feeling. Make yourself proficient, that you may be respected in your craft. It is always admirable to be in the first rank by sheer merit, whatever your profession. By a little trouble taken at the beginning, you will store up untold rewards in the future, in place of all those vexations which beset the idle and incompetent. Do your allotted tasks as apprentice with all the speed and concentration of a man on piece-rate, so as to acquire the lucrative habit of industry and find yourself in a position to earn big wages when you come to work for yourself. For unless he is industrious a craftsman cannot keep himself properly; everyone, even his fellow-workers, regards him with contemptuous pity, and his master has little use for him, because for urgent work a quick and clever hand is wanted. It is essential to hold fast to your principles in a town, otherwise you will fall into straits worse than destitution in the country. There is more than one way of losing them: by gambling, by drinking, and with women. Never gamble: drink what a sober man might reasonably take with his meals; water is the right thing to quench thirst and wine should only be used as a fortifying adjunct to necessary food. Beware of idleness, it breeds every vice. Honour women, and you will never become dissolute. Remember these words: honour women, and never believe the ill that drunkards and the evil-minded will tell you of them. Never scrutinise their conduct, until it is a question of your marriage, and then find some wise friend who will investigate for and with you. Finally, remember your family, which is so much honoured in the district that it has acquired a kind of nobility, and to be allied with it is in itself an honour. And certainly you have made some fine alliances! They say that, in far-off times, one of the girls entered the household of Harcourt. . . . Also no stain has ever been put upon your name; let this thought stop you, should evil counsels tempt you at any time. Observe your religious duties; never omit the daily prayers you learnt in your father's house; for besides being a homage due to God, they will keep you in memory of the principles taught you by your parents, and by Antoine Foudriat, your pastor and friend, who loves you as his own son. Never let an evening go by without examining, before you go to bed, in what you have made progress during the day or how deteriorated; that, in the first case, you may improve still more, and in the second make good your failure. The man who lives haphazard and never takes stock of himself lives like the brutes and is unworthy of the reason God has imparted to him. Observe that your father, who is a wise man, often takes account of himself – and he is doubly to be imitated. Fear God; and reflect that religion is the highest expression of the social bond. I am not saying in the least what your brothers, doubtless more pious than myself, would say to you; but I say this: a man subject to civil laws is bound by them; a religious man is further bound by a second code; and this speaks to his heart when other laws are silent, and keeps him continually in the presence of his Father and his Judge, who is God. If anyone tries to destroy your faith, as he has destroyed his own, consider him a fool who, mounted upon a high tower, tears down the balustrade because he is so sure of himself that he can do without it; or as one who, when lowered into a well, refuses to have the rope under his armpits, and ties it to his finger.

"Farewell, dear Nicolas. You have troubles ahead of you; but have you none here? Man finds his burden everywhere. Try to make your way honestly and to give yourself courage, think of the satisfaction your success will give to your parents. Do not fall short of your two elder brothers, or rather three if I include poor Edmond Boujat,* whom we have just lost. It will be hard upon your mother if her children do less well than Marie Dondène's. But goodbye, for it is late and you should go to bed, so as to leave early to-morrow morning before the heat of the day."

Such was the wise advice of my honoured pastor, and it was of great use to me as we shall see.

I went home thoughtfully, going over his words in my mind, and I repeated them to my father in the presence of the whole family during supper. Edme Restif commended him, saying: "I know that M. Antoine Foudriat is a wise man, and worthy of his office; profit by his advice." Thereupon he got up, took his Bible, and read the chapter in Genesis in which Isaac blesses first Jacob and then Esau: then he lifted up his voice and said: "My son Nicolas, you are leaving us to-morrow morning, and, in so far as it lies within a father's power to bless, I give you a father's blessing. May you prosper in the world, without loss of honour, virtue or religion. And may God bless you as I bless you! Amen!" All the family who had knelt with me replied *Amen.* Then we embraced and went to our beds.

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*My step-brother, Edmond Boujat the surgeon, died the year I left Courgis. If he had lived he would have opened up a different career to me; for my parents had wanted me to adopt, not his profession (because of the bleedings which I could not have done) but that of physician. I did not know this at the time – it was not until long after his death and during my apprenticeship that my mother showed me letters in which this kind brother, indignant at the conduct of my two other brothers, undertook to see that I learnt Latin, and to be responsible for me. His affairs were going so well that he could promise me a much better future than my brothers of Courgis. He would have taught me the rudiments and later paid my licence. His death was the second irreparable misfortune which ruined the promise of my youth.

END OF THE THIRD EPOCH

## *FOURTH EPOCH*

# MY APPRENTICESHIP

# &

# MADAME PARANGON

1751-1755

# *FOURTH EPOCH*

## My Apprenticeship and Madame Parangon

### 1751 – 1755

> *Non equidem totam possum defendere culpam :*
> *Sed partem nostri criminis error habet.*
> Ovid. *Trist.* III.

AT three o'clock on the morning of the 14th of July my father called me: "Nicolas!" (I can still hear his voice.) "Nicolas!" "Yes, father." "My son, I see the first streak of dawn." "Yes, father, I will get up." I rose in great agitation, my heart beating fast: for the day had come on which my life was to change entirely, and by evening my position and surroundings would be different from those of the morning of the same day. These thoughts absorbed me as I dressed. "Dear child," my mother said, "you must leave early so as to arrive in good time. You never know what may keep you on the road, and it is a good seven leagues from here to the town." "Do not be anxious, wife," said Edme Restif, "he will arrive before midday." "So much the better; for then he will escape the heat of the day, poor child, and his aunt's ass will not be tired out." I breakfasted on two new-laid eggs and a large glass of white wine. My father saddled the donkey himself; the baggage was fastened on, and . . . I departed, drenched with my mother's tears. My father went with me as far as the top of the mountain Vèzehaut, and only left me when it was broad day, with these parting words: "Nicolas, you are going to the town. Remember that you bear a name which is honoured here, for the sake of my worthy father and our other ancestors. Keep this thought always in mind. Three things would break my heart: loss of integrity, debauchery, or your marriage with a girl debased by the servitude of towns. Never forget this. Our family has always loved work, and you love it; so I say nothing about that. But town life may always corrupt a character which holds the germ of evil. Remember the praise bestowed upon you by your cousin Droin of the Villages; remember that all who bear our name or are allied to it will have their eyes upon you. Farewell, my son, and may God bless you, and put his seal upon the blessing which I gave you yesterday."

At these words I fell upon my knees, weeping and with a bowed head; and when I raised my eyes again, my father had already gone twenty paces. Just before he vanished behind the roadside hedges, he turned and lifted his eyes and hands to heaven in prayer for me.

In the meanwhile my ass and my baggage had been going steadily forward, so I turned at once and hurried after them; yet not without letting my eyes travel meditatively over the fields of Laloge and Courtenay, which I could see in the distance. I gave a sigh for Marie-Jeanne. . . . They were lost to sight as I entered the Hôpitaux wood.* Here I found strawberries,

*This wood had belonged to the Templars, and had passed into the hands of the *Commanderie* of Auxerre when they were dissolved. The order owned an asylum on the ground now called Grange-à-la-Sœur, which the peasants called *Hospitaux*; hence the name of the wood. Sacy, although unknown to history, was quite a considerable place under the Comtes d'Auxerre of Courtenay, who gave it to the Bishop and Chapter of Auxerre; with the exception of that part which had belonged to the Templars, the town and its environs, and a farm called *Bouteraie*. The Templars' lands were freed, but those of the Bishop and Chapter are laid under a contribution of one sheaf in twelve. A *Restif* was commander of the Templars at Sacy at the time of the dissolution of the Order.

and my spirits rose as I gathered them – so small a thing can change the colour of our thought! On leaving the wood and entering the chalky country that lies behind Vauxgermains, my heart was flooded with a joy and tenderness provoked (for no more was needed) by the beauty of the scene which opened to me; and with tears in my eyes I chanted my farewell to Marie-Jeanne. Further on, over against the corner of *la Provenchère* wood, there is a heath surrounded by a copse, which exactly reproduced the tapestries that had so stirred me in the dormitory of Saint Mayeul. Again the same sensations flooded over me, but more exquisitely, and I wept in a luxury of delight. My thoughts passed naturally to Courgis, especially when I caught sight of the road between it and Irancy; and Jeannette so poignantly engrossed my mind that, more than a year later, this moment was the inspiration of a poem which I shall summarise in its proper place. I walked on through country which was new to me, enchanted by the wild, natural beauty of its lonely places. I reached the sombre valley of *la Fée* (called by the people *Fâe*), which inspires a sort of religious terror. There was an old ruined tower, called the *Fairy's Tower,* on the hill, and flowering broom, which I had never seen before, grew along the edge; down in the valley the height of the trees and their dense foliage made a deep twilight. In the occasional clearings I found the same flowers which I had admired on the Saint-Mayeul tapestries. I was enraptured, for I can find delight in everything. Then suddenly my heart sank; I could not help remembering that, shy as I was, I was going to live among strangers, among townspeople who had always terrified me. Depression was gaining on me as I left the valley, and then the thought of Madame Parangon came to cheer me. "Come up, Martin!" I cried. "Get on! I wish I was with her now!" Ah! in what deep affliction I should have journeyed, had I known

. . . but I must not anticipate. I reached Saint Bris before nine o'clock, rested a little, and then set out for the town, where I arrived at eleven o'clock. (See the first engraving in my *Paysan-Paysanne Pervertis.*)

What an Epoch in my life, dear Reader! cutting it into two parts completely different from each other! Here was I, my own master, and with full control of all my actions, after the searching restraint of my brothers' rule and of my parents' cares! Here was I, who could not look at a woman without trembling, going to live in a town where the houses were not isolated, like la Bretonne or the Courgis presbytery, but touched each other and were full of pretty girls (for, on my first arrival, all the girls looked pretty with their white skins and city toilets). Here was I, with my excitable passions, surrounded by everything most liable to inflame them! I asked the way to M. Parangon's from M. Chambonnet, as I knew his address and my road lay past his house; and he told his son to take me there. I paused in front of the old clock tower to admire it; and young Chambonnet pointed out the ball which indicated the moons, and was black or gold according to the quarter, somewhat like the one at the Sorbonne. I was wonderstruck! . . . At last we came to M. Parangon's gate. Chambonnet, more self-possessed than I, announced me, and introduced me to a tall, pretty girl, whom, as I did not raise my eyes, I mistook at first for Madame Parangon. However, I soon discovered my mistake, and recognised her as one of the girls who had laughed at me the day I was introduced to M. Parangon. I unloaded the ass alone and without the young lady's paying the slightest attention to me. I thought it a little hard that she summoned no one to help me, but I called to mind the advice I had been given. Chambonnet led away Martin, and I did not know what to do next. No one said a word to me, until the tall girl got up and found my baggage in her way. "Do you mean to leave that stuff there?" she exclaimed contemptuously. "I d . . . don't know where to put them, M . . . ad . . . dame." "Over there!" and she showed me a glazed door which opened on to the courtyard. When the cook, a pretty pleasant girl, saw me carrying in my packages, she kindly came to my assistance, and showing me a closet above the privies, said: "This is the apprentices' room, we must get your luggage up here."* Thereupon she called my fellow-prentice *Boudard*, and *Tourangeot*, a servant, who came down quickly. They helped me to dispose of my luggage, and, as they were going out, offered to show me the printing room. *Aimée* gave me something to eat while waiting for dinner. I was deeply grateful for her kindness and showed my gratitude in a way that pleased her. I would have liked to run after young Chambonnet, who was taking Martin back to his father's house, but M. Parangon's appearance put a stop to that. I went forward to greet him, but all he said was: "So it's you? . . . Mind you do your duty," and turned his back. When dinner was brought in, the tall girl said to me: "Boy, go to the kitchen!" I went to the kitchen, at the far side of the court-yard, without M. Parangon, so polite at his father-in-law's, appearing even to notice me. The foreman and workmen came downstairs, and the apprentice and servant joined me in the kitchen. As the cook was giving us the remains of the soup, she told the latter to go and wait on the others. He gulped down his soup and hurried away. While we were eating, Boudard talked against Tourangeot. Aimée, who well deserved her pretty name, said smiling: "That's a compliment to you, Monsieur Nicolas;

*The present disposition of the rooms remains, Funck-Brentano states, much as in Restif's time. On entering the chemist's shop (as it is now) one reaches what was Fournier's work-room and, beyond, the room used by the family, which leads into the court-yard, where, on the left, a stairway ascends to the room above the privies, where Nicolas was first lodged. [Ed.]

M. Boudard trusts your discretion." The delicacy of this remark gave me a high opinion of Aimée. The food was good enough, and, being very hungry, I worried little whether I ate with the cook or with her master; on the contrary, with my temperament, I was less embarrassed in the kitchen. Boudard was from Vermenton, the son of M. Boudard-la-Grenouillière, a surveyor and a friend of my family; I asked him who the lady was I had taken for Madame Parangon. "That is Mademoiselle Manon Gauthier, sister of M. Gauthier of Préhy, whose mother was a Quatrevaux. She is Madame's cousin; Madame is in Paris at the moment." "In Paris!" I exclaimed mournfully. "But M. Gauthier de Préhy is a cousin of my own four times removed." Just then Tourangeot came back: "Well, she doesn't know anything about it then, because she has just said to the Master: 'Who is that . . . boy who has just come?' and M. Parangon replied: 'An apprentice that my father-in-law has sent me.' " I should indeed have been distressed had it been Madame Parangon who gave me so poor a welcome.

After dinner I wanted to go and see that my aunt's Martin was being properly cared for. Simple and inexperienced as I was, I thought I ought to ask permission of Mlle Gauthier, and did so in these words: "Please Mademoiselle, may I go and see my ass?" "By all means," she said mockingly. "One should never fail in what is due to one's fellows." I was somewhat disconcerted. Till then I had always been treated with consideration and courtesy; Mlle Gauthier was the first to dispense with them. My heart swelled, and I was near tears on my way. But it was worse when I returned, for I heard Mlle Gauthier saying to M. Parangon: "And your little peasant boy asked permission to go and see his ass! Ha! ha! ha." I did not hear any more.

I paid my first visit to the printing room with my fellow-prentice

Boudard to do the honours. I looked so bewildered and so raw that the workmen began to laugh; each had his joke on me, and of the coarsest; the printer Yeury's wife, a pretty blonde though something of a wanton, excelled in this, as did a Parisian, Manon Vernier, the daughter of a type-founder, who happened to be there. Both women were cousins of M. Parangon. "He'll wear well," said the former. "What makes you think so?" asked Chenou, one of the workmen. "Because he looks so green!" replied the Parisian. My clothes made me look the "peasant-abbé," a costume made for ridicule. I was simple and they took me, as such people do, for a simpleton; in an ordinary peasant, ingenuousness such as mine is as it should be, and all is of a piece, but my rather scholastic clothes suggested pretensions which contrasted with the simplicity of the wearer. . . . But this was not the only reason for my baiting. Old hands in all professions dislike the newcomers who are later to share their earnings, and try to make their position as intolerable as possible; so that at least a third lose heart and try something else, only to go through the same experience again. But this time the goaded apprentice becomes inured to it. "What people!" I thought to myself. "But M. Boudard de la Grenouillière, whose wife comes of a good family, has put his son here, so why not I? His father is respected as mine is; he is even more the *gentleman.*" So I comforted and encouraged myself. Yet I could not help noticing with surprise that some of the workmen were marked with disease, and Boudard, observing this, whispered in my ear: "That comes from debauchery." As I was passing the press of Chenou, a great talker but little of a worker, he took my hand and said to the others: "He will want his iron gloves." This was a trap, but my new comrade did not warn me.

The first work given me by Boudard, on whom, as my senior, my preliminary training devolved, was not attractive to one who had pictured himself in the noble exercise of a distinguished craft. The task was "dirt-picking," that is, separating from the sweepings any of the type dropped by the workmen that has escaped the notice of the sweeper (in future none other than myself), and then sorting and distributing it (putting it back in case). So I began my career with my nose in the dirt, like a Paris ashman. It was now that the teaching of my parents was useful, enabling me to attack all my work with courage, and shut my eyes to its repulsive character. I could even look forward to the pleasure I should get from describing my work to the assembled family, my father and mother, and six young brothers and sisters, vaunting my most degrading tasks, so as to astound the youngsters and dispose them to submission. As I went about the sweeping, I reviewed M. Antoine Foudriat's advice, and took comfort in saying to myself: "I will follow it."

I have said that the apprentices were at the orders of the workmen, who did not spare them; so I had as many masters as there were printers, and was no sooner installed than I had to obey them all. Hardly a minute of my day passed without some order or other, and for the most part useless, unjust or ridiculous, and sometimes unlawful; for not only had I to minister to all the needs, but to all the caprices of thirty-two workmen, a master, two women, my fellow-prentice, and even the man-servant, who made me get the water for him. I had to fetch their dinners and afternoon snacks, their fill of wine, tobacco, and so on. Nor was this all: these gentry must have their Mercury, to carry their coarsely passionate, crapulously amorous notes to mistresses I should have blushed to own. And the best of it was that, when these printer-gentlemen could not write, as Billom of Limousin, or compose a letter, which none could do save two, I had the choice of writing for them, or delivering their sledge-hammer compliments by word of mouth and explaining them to some washerwoman at her tub or cook in her scullery. Boudard had been well trounced by an ironer, *Babet*, for having repeated the Flemish *Rüttot's* passionate phrases too exactly. In short, an apprentice was lower than a slave,* and accounted without mind,

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*Pages were even in worse case; the old hands subjected newcomers to unheard of cruelties. The position of apprentices has improved since the Revolution. Our workmen came from Flanders, Liège, Limousin, Avignon, Comtois, Sénon, etc. They were all drunken fools with the exception of *Degout*, the Comtois, who was the most knavish, sneaking rogue, and at the same time most intelligent man I have ever met in the profession. He did me the honour to hate me on sight, and it was at his hands I endured my greatest mortifications. He had no need of my help, not even to be his messenger, as his mistress was his landlady, Mme *Saint-Paul*, who stole money from her husband and gave it to her lover so that the lover could pay the husband what he owed him. And she was by no means old, but a young and pretty woman, which shows how thoroughly he managed to seduce her. Other names that come to my mind are *Bourgoin* the foreman, M. Parangon's greatest friend, and cousin of a certain Manon who was Colette's friend and . . . deputy . . .; *Clisot*, a first-rate pressman, though otherwise a fool, married and a steady man; *Gonnet*, simple, blunt, brutal and lascivious; *Lapierre* (now *Lyre*, a bookseller in Paris), who always looked drunk without being so; *Géminique* from Liège, but of Swiss birth, a good fellow but a drunkard; *Rüttot*, a Flemish dandy, handsome and a coarse brute; *Floriau*, bastard of a dissolute bishop, with something more of refinement; *Edme* the Convulsionary, later a bookseller in Paris, who died mad in the Hôtel de Dieu after having taken from me the whole proceeds on three of my books, *Le Pornographe, Les Lettres d'une fille à son père* and *La Mimographe*; Chenou, whom I have already mentioned; *Courtois*, a young booby from Paris, who felt a respect for my "abbé's" costume in spite of himself; *Yeury*, the oldest hand and husband of one of M. Parangon's cousins, a pretty but somewhat dissolute wanton; *Lantrade*, a Parisian and a drunken clown; *Roland* an old drunkard but honest; *Lapierre* the old Parisian, whose noble features retained something of their dignity even when he was stupefied with drink; *Taillepied*, a green young Parisian and brother of a Paris jeweller; Flemish *Tresignies*, rich by inheritance and always well garnished with braid, and as fat-headed and obstinate a jackanapes as I have ever known; *Francis*, a loafer who alternately worked and tramped and begged, an excellent pressman; *Colas* of Lyons, young and very ingenuous, now distributer of type at the Fonderie Beaumarchais; *Fusier*, formerly a master printer of Avignon, a wit and dandy of Provence. The rest changed in the first fortnight, and as I was busy sorting the bins of rubbish accumulated by Boudard, or working in the shop with Tourangeot, I only just caught sight of them. And Tourangeot had been a Tartar, an army servant. . . . Such were my companions – a young man who had known none but upright kindly people, lovers of honesty and virtue! . . .

feelings, or shame; he was the printers' tool to be put to any base use they liked, considering himself lucky, poor wretch, when the infamous task imposed on him only earned him one of three drubbings: from the parents, or from the workman (if his mission was unsuccessful), or from the master. He was liable to be caught by the law! The whole lot of them had not the slightest notion of decent behaviour, and I was not surprised at this when I realised that one is apprenticed to vice and the most cynical and crapulous meanness rather than to a trade. Boudard, a boy of excellent character when he came to M. Parangon, and again when he was fully grown and developed, was a little monster who knew the smell of every vice. The Tartar Tourangeot had helped his master to rape and loot in Flanders; he used to describe without the least shame how his master, a M. Jeurat of Vermenton, would hand over the farmers' girls to him, when he had had enough of them and could not extract a ransom from the poor wretches' parents; and how he, Tourangeot, had wanted to marry one of these, and was nearly killed by her family when the army left. Tourangeot was M. Parangon's pet, and was to marry a former servant of the house, called *Marie*, whom M. Parangon had only managed to seduce by promising her Tourangeot as a husband. Boudard knew all about this, and it was one of the first things he told me. I was in a state of such constant and profound astonishment that I gave the impression of being stupid.

No sooner did young Boudard find himself freed from the slavery of being bottom dog, than he joined the workmen in tormenting me. He studied my little weaknesses and idiosyncrasies for the benefit of the others and to make me a butt. Even the Tartar joined in the sport. I marvelled that such fools should jeer at me in spite of my superiority to them, of which they were as well aware as myself. As everyone knows, newcomers are put through certain ordeals, cruel or merely ludicrous, to pay for their footing as it were. It was the custom to persuade the innocent apprentice that he needed iron gloves for his work. Without being quite a fool, a young man fresh to his business and hearing a hundred unknown terms a day, might well imagine that "iron glove" was a technical term. Boudard, in whom I still trusted implicitly as the son of my father's friend, reminded them of this stupid trick. "A boy of that age will never swallow it," said the workmen. "You have no idea what a gull he is," answered the faithless Boudard. "He'll swallow anything." He came and found me among my rubbish, and said with apparent unconcern: "Monsieur Nicolas, this frisket* has to go to the locksmith to be mended, and at the same time you might as well be measured for your iron gloves, so that if you have to work at the press, you will not get your hands cut about." He gave me the frisket and I went on my errand. I ordered my iron gloves from the locksmith. "Aha," said the man, "then I must take your measure." He brought a strip of sheet-iron, made two holes at either end, bent it round my wrist, and, just when I was not paying much attention, put nails through and, riveted them. "Go and ask them if that will do." I was quite able to believe that such a bracelet might be necessary, as I had not yet had the chance to examine all the processes of the work. But on the way back I became suspicious: "What could be the use of an iron band round the arm? . . . And it is riveted! It's a trick, just like those thickheads!" I got it off with great difficulty and returned to the house. But I went in such fear of these bullies that I preferred to risk their idiotic laughter to failing in something that might be necessary, so I kept the bracelet in my hand. All the workmen, and especially the clown Boudard, who had followed me without my noticing it and had seen the nails riveted, were waiting for me at the printing room windows, which looked on to the courtyard. Directly I came in sight they raised the uproar of a charivari, beating and shouting. I was no longer in doubt; and, turning into the wetting-room, threw the bracelet into the cellar. No one could see that I had paused, and I went straight up to the printing room with unadorned wrists. The jesters inspected me; Boudard was stupefied. I said not a word and gave no sign of offence; I acted as if nothing had happened and as unconcernedly as if some one else had been the victim. Boudard, childishly set on his little games, went to make enquiries of the locksmith. "If it's there," the smith replied, "I must have put it there. If it's not there, either he has taken it off, or I never put it on. From the two or three remarks he made to me, I think he's up to more tricks than you, little Mr. Know-all. Be off and see if he has not pushed it up above his elbow." Boudard returned in a great rage with the locksmith, and repeated what he had said to the workmen. They thought he had warned me, and were so much offended that they threatened to withdraw their custom. Then, not wanting to injure the man, I admitted that he had riveted the bracelet on my arm, but that, on hearing their laughter, I had thrown it into the cellar of the wetting-room. "Oh, what a fool!" they shouted. "And what a fool of a fool to admit it," added the thing called Yeury. I realised that the motive of my confession was quite beyond their comprehension; so a glance of scorn was the sole expression of my thoughts, as I turned to my dust-heap.

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*A light sheet of metal to which the paper is stuck, and which is cut out where the impression is to be taken; the part remaining protects the sheets from blots.

Chance revenged me on Boudard in three ways. I had sorted my three dustbins and proceeded to distribute. I had picked out an immense quantity of broken and rusty type. After I had washed it, I distributed it while the workmen were on a carouse. They were delighted to find their cases full on their return; but they soon noticed the amount of broken and rusty type. They swore at me, and would have ill-treated me in spite of the foreman, if the owner had not come in. The matter was explained; and the lazy Boudard, who had let his rubbish accumulate for a year or two, for the benefit of his successor, got all the blame and was severely punished. I was given work in the shop, and the proud, free Boudard was degraded to his old servitude. A greater humiliation followed. We were set to work on composing the Latin *Canons* from the Martyrology, which was then being printed. The accents had to be observed. In my eight pages out of the twenty-four, which I set up to Boudard's sixteen, I fell into such typographical errors as using two or three pieces instead of one for fl, ffl, fi, ffi, ft, ct, fl, fb; but in everything else I was correct. When the proof had been taken off, Boudard took it down to the master to be read. He saw that it swarmed with mistakes, and asked which was my work. He soon recognised it by the beginner's mistakes. When he had finished, M. Parangon made his old pupil look at my eight pages, threw the proofs in his face, and helped him out of the room with a kick. Boudard returned in tears and, when the foreman asked him what had happened, he said: "I was thrashed for his idiotic mistakes." "I'm surprised at that; the master knows it is the first time Nicolas has composed, and he could not expect perfection at once, much less blame his mistakes on you." Boudard did not want the proofs to be seen, but M. Parangon, who was well aware of M. de la Grenouillière's childish vanity, had followed him stealthily, and here intervened in a terrible voice (that is, to judge from my comrade's trembling): "No, no, the scamp was not punished for Nicolas's blunders; but for his own incurable idiocy, inattention, laziness, lack of intelligence, and utter worthlessness." Then he called together the compositors and showed them the proofs, saying: "Pick out the work of the apprentice of a day and the work of the apprentice who has served four years." They knew mine at once by the beginner's faults, but were surprised at my accuracy. "That's because he knows Latin," they said to each other. For I had done better than the experienced printers, with the exception of Degout and Fusier. This little incident earned me some respect among the compositors, and even among the pressmen, who claimed that it proved that their work was more difficult than composing.

And what did I gain by their better opinion of me? This. As soon as I got the reputation of being clever, I had to write all their precious love-letters, and often deliver them as well; truly a vile commission. These charmers were ugly, lecherous and lower than the lowest. Handsome Rüttot had two mistresses, the prettiest of the Lucotes (in this province, a feminine ending is given to the surname when speaking of women), whose father was a harness-maker, and Mlle Douie, a charming girl, whose mother was a midwife. The latter regretted her lover but dismissed him. Gonnet had Tonton Lenclos, Mme Yeury's niece, who was also mistress of the Premonstrant Barbier, afterwards Bishop of Condorcet. Gonnet's more virtuous mistresses were Julien, a pastrycook's very silly little daughter, and a girl called Trébuchet, who caught him by her . . . name.* Pyre had the two Tartre sisters, seamstresses; Geminique, Babet a dressmaker; Taillepied, a washerwoman from the hill of Saint Loup, called Chapotin, and Colas had her friend, a tripe-seller in the rue des Cornes. I wrote his tender farewells, when Colas left. The mistress of the haughty Trésignies was a tall, handsome girl, whose father kept a cook-shop. Chenou, dare I tell it! was in intimate relation with Mlle Brochard, daughter of . . . the hangman. . . . The crapulous pair, Billom and Francis, used to visit Beausoleil, the one public woman of the town. Lantrade and Fusier consorted with the sisters Guigner; Floriau, a distinguished-looking man of forty, had Mme Gendot, a pretty hairdresser with no children, who also entertained the Cordeliers and others. Hardly a week passed without my having to write and deliver a letter to each one of these charmers, even to the two roughest, on behalf of my lady-killers. My bullies would swagger up to me, and make me leave my work. "Come, abbé, a letter! So! Sprightly or wanton or pungent or adoring or sensible or humble! . . ." Not only had I to satisfy these ferocious animals by putting the filthy ideas they sketched out on paper, but I had to avoid being caught by the master. For I should have been punished by him for wasting my time, and tormented by the workman for having neglected his errand. Nor was this all: to deliver these effusions, I had, like some vile pimp, to hang about for the mothers to go out, and waste a lot of time; so that I risked a thrashing on my return if the master chanced to notice the length of my absence. And though this annoyance never befell me, I suffered from the knowledge that M. Parangon thought me an idler who was following in Boudard's footsteps. He reprimanded me in his own way, which was anything but gentle, for he accompanied his words with a handling as painful as it was humiliating. But what could I do? Suffer and be patient. There were two objections to telling the truth: M. Parangon, by nature violent and brutal, would first have stormed at the men, who might have taken offence, left their work and walked out; and then, as they were necessary to the business, he would have vented his temper on me. Or, if he had behaved with moderation, my case would have been worse; for my life itself might have been in danger from the daily cruelties and indignities I should have been made to endure.

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**Trébucher:* to tumble, to tumble down, with ambiguous meaning. [Ed.]

My articles were not to be completed until after two months' probation, and as my four years' apprenticeship would count from that date, it was to my interest to hasten this formality. I was allowed to go and see my father. I was careful to make no complaints, on this first visit, from the fear that they would think: "He can't get on anywhere," which would be a triumph for my brothers. This was the only thing that kept me to printing and so, as we shall see, determined my future. The only remark I made which savoured of disappointment was: "Mme Parangon was in Paris when I arrived and she is still there." My father and mother were tenderly affectionate with me, and I saw that, by making no complaint, I had forestalled a fear they shared with me, that I should give my brothers occasion to triumph. I was a little more open with M. Foudriat, who said these very words: "If you are doing what others do and what you cannot refuse to do without too much unpleasantness, go on with it. But keep yourself alive to the hatefulness of what you see; and since you must see it, remember that you have only to see it clearly for it to become loathsome to you."

My father told me the day on which he would come to Auxerre, and I returned thither, leaving my mother regretful; for she saw that I was keeping something back into which my father did not care to enquire, and would have liked to question me. I did not suffer as much on this return to my new home, as I used to when I went back to Vermenton. On the contrary, I experienced a feeling of pleasure; privately and without suspecting it, I was beginning to like the town.

My joy in witnessing the completion of my articles and the beginning of my apprenticeship was somewhat damped by M. Parangon's just complaints of my idleness. But when I set my father upon his way, after signing the contract before a notary, I thought I might tell the truth. He asked me why I had not explained this to the Master. "It would have been the end of me!" I exclaimed. "And I entreat you never to mention it." "I would have taken you away. I would take you away now if it were not for the contract. . . ." "Ah, father, the wine is poured and must be drunk! What would my brothers and everyone else say? I must possess myself in patience until a newcomer sets me free." I saw that my argument had impressed my father. He commended my determination, and seemed satisfied.

As I was saying, I was beginning to like the town, and trembled at the thought of leaving it! . . . And I must reveal the reason, dear, honest Reader; it was that I was desirous of women rather than for one woman; more amorous of the sex than of any member of it, however charming; and I perceived many opportunities in my new life for the satisfaction of a craving which grew daily stronger. My neighbour, on one side, was that pretty and attractive Prudhot, of whom I had caught a glimpse the first time Marguerite Pâris and I had dined with Madame Jeudy; and on the other, were the three charming *Baron* sisters, all of whom I found equally attractive. This was enough to account for my determination; and in a little while I was to have other reasons of the same sort! *Edmée Servigné* was to appear and the divine *Colette* return from Paris. . . . But I must turn to another kind of annoyance to which I was exposed, now that I have done with the hard and tedious beginnings of my craft, which are very much the same in all professions where a lot of workmen are employed.

Mme Parangon's absence lasted three months after my arrival. During that time – long enough when one is unhappy – we have seen how they plagued me in the printing room. Remains my domestic life. At first

Mlle Gauthier, that fourth cousin of mine who had honoured me with such complete contempt, was in charge of the house. But I did not long have to suffer her caprices. She was in love with her cousin, Robin the postmaster, although he was married; but M. Parangon, who was amorous to the point of frenzy, tried to make love to his wife's pretty deputy. A secret passion is a surer protection than virtue; and when she found herself hard pressed, she wrote privately to her cousin, Mme Parangon, saying that *she could not take her place any longer, because M. Parangon wanted her to take it too thoroughly.* Mme Parangon, who did not yet know her husband, thought he would respect his own blood; so she sent him a cousin-german from Paris; that Manon Vernier of whom I have already spoken. On her arrival Mlle Gauthier left.

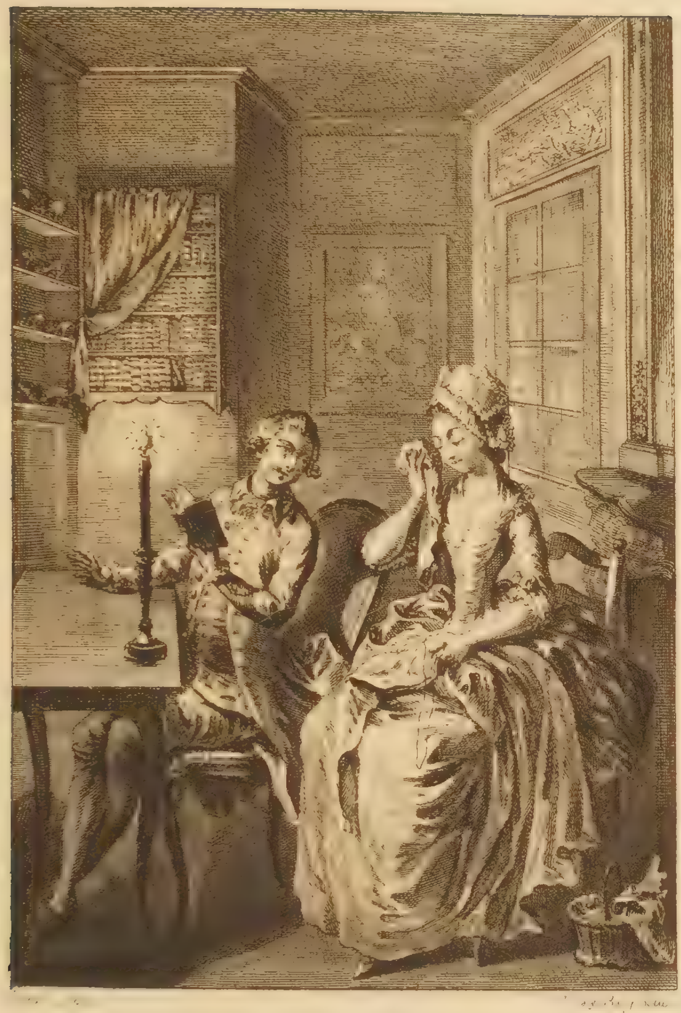
Manon was a small Parisian with irregular little features, fairly pretty, and very impudent; and specially contemptuous of anyone she called a *peasant.* As I had the misfortune not to please her, she made fun of me with all the clumsy rudeness of an uneducated little work-girl, incapable of appreciating merit unless tricked out in tinsel. One day her relative, Nannette Chindé, a tall brunette from the Grandcaire quarter, and daughter of a vine-dresser's stoker, gave her a cake. Manon cut it into slices: one was for M. Parangon, and one for the foreman, while Boudard, Tourangeot and the cook were also honoured with a portion. I was the only one left out, although I was present. Tourangeot, who enjoyed humiliating me, asked her why she had not given me any. "Do I know him?" she replied. I was delighted by this rudeness from one whom I disliked, for it would have annoyed me to have had to accept anything from her. However, I concealed my pleasure under an appearance of indifference which mortified her. She determined to have her revenge.

The same evening, after supper, she went for a walk with Bourgoin and Boudard; Tourangeot ran off to his Marie, and I was left alone in the living-room with Aimée. I took a book I have already mentioned, the Latin text of Ovid's *Heroides* with a bad translation in French verse. At first I read the Latin to myself; then, forgetting all about Aimée, who was sitting behind me, I began to read the Epistle of Ariadne to Theseus aloud. I was moved by it, and my voice took on the ringing sonorous intonation which emotion seems to communicate to the larynx. In the middle of my reading I heard a deep sigh. I turned round. Aimée, a sensitive girl, had melted into tears. By the time I had finished the girl was sobbing. "You find it touching, Aimée?" "And so do you, Monsieur Nicolas. . . . Ah, how lucky are people who can read like that! In books they can find the expression of what others must keep in their hearts!" "Yes. And I have other reasons to be affected . . . in a strange place . . . among people. . . ." "And badly treated as you are, by . . ." "Oh, that's all in the day's work, and is not my greatest annoyance." "Still you were insulted most unfairly just now." "Insulted? I? How?" "It hurt me very much, and I would have liked to give her back the piece she gave me." "You would have done wrong, Aimée. It would have been rude." "You can have some of the cake now if you would like it." "Do you take me for a glutton?" "I have noticed you are very much the reverse. . . . But what a lovely book that is you were reading just now. Would you please, if you are not too tired, read it again?" "I should like to very much, Aimée. The epistle touched me, too, and I will read it again with pleasure." I started. But at these lines:

*I do not know if I was waking quite*
*Or still a captive in some dream of night,*
*But this I know: to stifle my alarms*
*I went toward your place and stretched my arms . . .*

*No more of Theseus for me! I was dumb*
*And bled and trembled, as I tried the gloom:*
*Alas, I saw my care deceived anon;*
*No more of Theseus for me! He was gone . . .*
*'Twas then, ah, most awake in all the world,*
*I saw the gulf to which I had been hurled. . . .*

At these lines, I say, Aimée choked. I turned round. She tried to smile, but could not control her tears and sobs. She left the room, and a moment later returned with her piece of cake which she wanted me to eat. "You mustn't think of it, Aimée! I do not want it any longer, even though your hands have touched it, and that should make it taste delicious. I will not eat it; but I am grateful for your kindness. . . . Now is there any way in which I can help you? Speak frankly, Aimée, for I can see in your eyes you have something to tell me." "Yes, Monsieur Nicolas; you are gentle and well-behaved, and no scoffer. . . . I would like to . . . make a sort of confession . . . of something that is weighing on me. I have watched you since you have been here. You are better than anyone in the place, without excepting the master . . . I do not say, and the mistress, because she well deserves to have you in her house." She paused. This preamble disquieted me, but she continued. "It is because your behaviour has made me respect you that I am going to confide in you . . . I have a lover" (I breathed again) "and he has promised to marry me." "He will keep his promise; you are . . . so pretty!" "He is a cooper, called Châtelain; and he gave me to understand that to get his parents' consent, it would be necessary. . . ." She blushed and lowered her beautiful eyes; then sighed, then sobbed, then burst into a torrent of tears. "I am pregnant." "Calm yourself, dear girl, and tell me how I can help you." "Write for me to Châtelain, who has gone to Joigny, and tell him that *my very life depends on him.*" "Yes, I will



write. I will write at once; and I cannot do better than put what you have just said." "Oh, Monsieur Nicolas, I shall owe you my life, if he comes back." "He loves you?" "I am sure he does." "And so am I, because you deserve it; but a girl as pretty as you should have been more cautious." "Alas! . . ." And tears completed her answer. I wrote the letter and, at her request, read it to her three times; and she ran to post it. Châtelain (to finish the incident at once) was so touched by it, that he returned directly he had read it, and preparations for the marriage were begun. I never think of the evening on which I read that Epistle and of what followed after without emotion.

Next day I went out after supper with Boudard, who, with Manon and Tourangeot had made a plot against me. They had noticed how frightened I was of dogs, and had determined to get my legs well bitten by the dogs which are kept under the stalls in the meat market. They suggested a game of prisoners' base in the square of the Hôtel de Ville. I had lost none of my agility. The players were some clerks, the two sons of a barrister, a doctor's son, a councillor's son, and boys who worked for surgeons, apothecaries or grocers. They were all amazed at my fleetness! Then Boudard, the blind tool of Manon, who hated me I know not why, suggested that they should play me a trick. They chased me beyond the boundaries of the game, and down a road which led to the one they wanted to drive me into. Coming to the fatal street, I slipped up it to shake them off; but when I had got about half-way, to my surprise and terror I heard and felt the dogs at my heels! The first bark roused them all, and they chased me up the road. I am sure no deer ever ran more fleetly! I hardly touched the ground, and managed to outdistance them. But at the end of the *Cour du Palais,* I could go no further and was forced to sink to the ground, where I lay panting for more than five minutes. . . . At last I got up, and returned by way of the Palace to where we had been playing. On my appearance, my comrades started shouting: "His legs! Let's see his legs!" And immediately a dozen lights were brought out of the shops to see if my legs had been torn by the dogs. I described my escape, and complained of the way in which they had abused my ignorance; and Mme Bourdeaux, a niece of M. Foudriat, gave her nephew Nombret, who had abetted Boudard, a good scolding. He put the blame on my comrade, who had already disappeared. When I got home I was consumed by a burning thirst. I told Boudard, and he told Mlle Manon, who had just used all the drinkable water in the house for a foot-bath. By her orders he brought me some of the water from the bath, and himself got something to drink at a neighbouring house. I was on the point of swallowing this water, of which the warmth alone would have turned my stomach, when Aimée came in and stayed my hand, at the same time giving me a large glass of lemonade. Manon and her two accomplices were watching from a distance, but, as there was little light, they did not see Aimée carrying away the jug of dirty water and leaving the lemonade. Had she overheard the plot, and saved me from it? She never told me. There was great merriment in the shop every time I took a sip of lemonade. I heard one of them say: "He is thoroughly enjoying it!" And then from Tourangeot the Tartar: "He is like a horse, he prefers his water a bit dirty." I did not understand what they were talking about, and went off to bed. Manon, Boudard and Tourangeot ran up to enjoy the joke, and were met by a pleasant smell of lemonade, which made their malicious laughter die on their lips. They tasted my drink. "What is this?" the Parisian asked Aimée. "Water, Mademoiselle, with a little lemon in it. I threw the other away because it was . . ." "You have just brought this in, then?" "Yes, Mademoiselle, and I gave some to M. Nicolas, because he was choking with thirst." "A plague on the wench!" shouted Manon in a passion. "See," she added to Boudard, "he has been drinking lemonade instead of . . ." and she burst out laughing. Later she was obliged to reveal the plot to Aimée, so as to get the water-jugs cleaned. The cook was angry, and threatened to inform the master, so that the young lady was reduced to entreaties – for which she never forgave the girl.

A few days later, Manon contrived an insult to Aimée of a kind which showed the full extent of this Paris girl's depravity. The pretty cook, whose condition made her tire easily, used to go to sleep after dinner on her bed. The door fitted badly and would not shut, so that the sleeper was visible from outside. Manon knew Aimée's habit and watched for an occasion when some chance movement should indecently expose her. When she at last caught her almost naked, instead of waking her, as she should have done to a person of her own sex, she made Tourangeot tell the workmen; and all of them, except the foreman, came to glut their lustful eyes upon her charms, which they much commended. At first I did not realise the cause of the disturbance; but I understood soon enough and hurried indignantly to my little room, where there was a blocked-up door leading down to the kitchen. I knocked loudly on it, and woke poor Aimée, who put herself to rights.

When the mob had withdrawn, I went and told her what had taken place, and of the steps I had taken to wake her by knocking on the disused door. Aimée seized one of my hands, and kissed it in spite of me. "God bless you, you good boy," she said, "for preventing those lechers from . . ." I found a phrase for the thought she had left unexpressed: "From profaning the sex of their mothers." A few days later Aimée left to get married.

A brief observation: with all those admitted vices which had brought upon me my brothers' condemnation, I was still a masterpiece of virtue for the town. What, then, must have been the town's corruption!

Our good Aimée was succeeded by a girl of Avallon, Tiennette, who was perhaps even better. The women from round about the ancient capital of the Antissiodores are not pretty; they seem expressly made to work for the most abandoned ruffians without risk to themselves. But higher up, towards Morvand, which begins at Percy-le-Sec, a league this side of Avallon, the Burgundians are pretty enough. Tiennette was charming. . . . Dear Reader, I have been guilty of many faults in my life, as you will see only too soon in the sequel, but when I was young and uncorrupted by town life, I was virtuous. The coarse vices which I witnessed daily, far from seducing me, increased my inclination towards decency; and this was fortified by the advice given and repeated to me by my virtuous family. My service to sweet Aimée was rendered simply and in all purity; and more than once I protected the honour of pretty Tiennette, who, innocent and ingenuous, would have been ruined but for me!

Before leaving us, Aimée had begged me to write and tell Mme Parangon her reasons for leaving. I did so, and ventured to add my respectful greetings in a postscript, for Madame Parangon did not know I had arrived. She wrote immediately to ask her father *to send a well-behaved Morvandaise, coming of an honest family and well brought up, to take the place of a girl she had been able to trust; because,* she added, *these are the only girls whose honour and integrity can be absolutely relied on.* Mme Collet recommended Tiennette, on the request of the girl's mother, and her excellent husband despatched her to his son-in-law. The first time I saw her, she was about her work in the courtyard and I was coming down for something to eat. Aimée had stayed for dinner with us, as Tiennette did not arrive till three. She counted over the plate with the latter and, after showing her where everything was, waited to say goodbye to me, and then left. My heart was full at losing so good a friend. She had done me a thousand little kindnesses, such as a sister might do for her brother. . . .

Tiennette, on her advice, came up to me. "Monsieur Nicolas, I am all amazement to find myself in a house with so many men. . . . But Aimée has just told me you are a kind and decent lad from Sacy, not three leagues from Avallon, and come of respectable parents and a good family; and that if I cannot trust you, I can trust no one. But I do trust you, M. Nicolas, on the strength of your father's name which is well known where I come from, and I beg you to guide me in everything, except my work as cook which I understand; for I am a very ignorant girl. I too come of honest folk, called Dominez: one of my relatives is even a barrister in Paris, or an attorney. So I beg you as a favour to protect me, because I am a simple-minded girl, and if I had known the mistress was not here I should have put off coming." I was delighted by this artless speech, in which I have not changed one syllable. "I will give you advice gladly," I replied, "but there must not be the slightest sign of any understanding between us. There would be gossip, and that would do you harm." I remembered my father's warning not to fall in love with a servant. Tiennette was not so beautiful as Aimée, but she was daintier and younger, more delicately made and very artless. Her clothes, which were not those of a servant, had the grace and cleanliness peculiar to the Morvandaises. Everyone was much more struck by her than by Aimée; master and foreman, workmen and servant, all aspired to win her heart, or to seduce her. Innocent Tiennette was much embarrassed. She was so simple, that she scarcely dared to refuse

M. Parangon, for fear of seeming disrespectful; at least so I gathered from what she told me. Happily Manon, who was the chief recipient of M. Parangon's attentions, grew jealous, and it was her presence that saved Tiennette at the beginning. Nevertheless her danger was at times terrifying.

One Sunday, when M. Parangon had got rid of everyone except me with the express intention of conquering Tiennette, he importuned her so brutally, that the unhappy child threw herself at his feet in tears, entreating him to spare her honour. She got little for her prayers. He told her to get up; she obeyed in all simplicity, and he sprang at her. The poor girl was thrown over, and began to scream in terror: "Monsieur Nicolas! Help!" I flew to her, thinking it was a fire. I burst into the room, flinging the door violently open, and was at the other end of it in a flash, to be petrified by the sight of the master! But he, with all the shamelessness of the hardened lecher and contemptuous of a shy young peasant, said harshly: "It is a great impertinence to come into any room where I am! . . . Get out!" For a second I longed to outface him; but my diffidence got the better of me, and I should have been weak enough to leave Tiennette to his mercies, had not the poor girl taken advantage of her moment's respite, and rushed to me. Once outside the room, M. Parangon was well aware she would never return. Also, he reflected that I knew his wife's family. So he left us alone and went off to amuse himself with the titillating Manon.

After his departure I comforted Tiennette. I gave her some sound advice, which also fortified my own good resolutions in her regard, for, with my ardent temperament, I was often sorely tempted. But apart from the fact that Tiennette, as a servant, was treated with as little consideration as a black slave by the master and his friends, something she had told me was another incentive to self-restraint. Before he used ruder methods,

M. Parangon had tried to coax her: he told her about Marie, who was going to marry Tourangeot (after he had learnt the trade), and added: 'And I happen to have just the man for you, Nicolas. He is a good, simple-minded lad, and you shall have him if I am satisfied with you. Do not worry about ways and means; I know how it can be done. And your reputation will not suffer." This revelation terrified me, and I warned Tiennette not to build on such a promise. "Oh, I am quite aware of that or I would not have told you, though he forbade me to," answered the girl, who was ingenuous without being stupid. "But I do not want to keep anything from you. I could love you very much, Monsieur Nicolas, but I am not a fool: I know that you are a young man with no position as yet, and that your parents will have plans for you; I am just a servant, and should not want to marry a fine lad like you, especially after I had done something horrible. I only came here because it was the one way of avoiding a marriage I disliked. I left home all at odds with my people; still my mother was kind enough to recommend me to Madame's mother, and she is keeping an eye on me to see how I turn out. But without you I should indeed have walked straight into the lion's mouth. A girl does very wrong to leave her family! Yet if I had not left mine, what would have become of me? Ah, it is not right for parents to force their daughters!" "Have you a lover?" "Indeed, yes! But I did not want to mention him until I had quite made up my mind." This confession reassured me, for I was beginning to see danger in Tiennette. I left her to continue my translation of Terence, for whom I had kept my first enthusiasm; and once I had settled down a little, I used all my spare moments in translating his comedies, as much for my own pleasure as to improve my Latin: so deep a first impression is never effaced. At the same time there were powerful counter-attractions. Some romantic novels had come my way. And whose? Madame de Villedieu's.* They held me entranced, and for three months I dwelt in a country of dreams; my romantic imagination was in its element, and they alone could have made me love the town. It was Villedieu who enabled me to await Mme Parangon's return with patience.

I had been working quietly for about an hour at the foreman's desk, either on my translation or on my verses, when I heard Tiennette making the bed in his room, which was next door to the press. She was singing. But in a few minutes I heard her calling out in a smothered voice: "Help! Help!" I thought it must be our formidable old lecher again; but now, thoroughly indignant, I ran to her help. This time it was the foreman, a great lusty fellow, in love with a girl called Huot, whose superabundant curves well matched her massive lover. Bourgoin had just had his afternoon snack, and never dreamed that at that time and in such lovely weather I should have shut myself up in the workroom. The sight of me upset him; he made a pretence at laughing, and signed me to discretion. But the most extraordinary thing happened after he had gone. I doubt if anyone has ever received such an offer; certainly the incident is unique in my own life, at any rate in so far as motives are concerned.

When Tiennette had set herself to rights and finished making the bed, she came up, still trembling, to the printing room. "What a lot I owe you,

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*Restif refers on several occasions to the novels of Madame de Villedieu which evidently made a considerable impression on him. Her real name was Catherine Hortense des Jardins and she belonged to the previous century (1631-1683). She had an adventurous life but finally settled down at her birthplace in Normandy to marry a cousin who had been her first lover and by whom she had had a child. Tallemant des Réaux narrates some amusing stories about her (vol. vi, p. 47). Her novels, though well written, show no great originality, but illustrate the phase the novel was then passing through. Saintsbury (*History of the French Novel,* vol. i, pp. 241-5) gives some account of her work and regards her as the counterpart of Aphra Behn in England. [Ed.]

Monsieur Nicolas," she said, taking my hands. "You are my good angel." She stood silent, weeping. I tried to comfort her. Never was a girl more appealing. A moment after she threw herself into my arms, choked by her sobs. I feared the poor girl had fallen a victim to one or other of the assaults, and grieved for her. "Dear Tiennette," I said, in this belief, "I know it is a great misfortune to lose your . . . but be comforted; it was not your fault." "Ah, Monsieur, they took care to make it perfectly clear what they wanted; especially M. Parangon who wished me to help him, but they did not take. . . . I should have died of grief if your wicked *bourgeois* (as you call him), or that fat red-headed foreman, or any of the workmen, or that scrofulous Tourangeot who gives himself such airs, had taken. . . . But all the same I see I shall never keep my maidenhead* either here or anywhere else, because I am being assaulted all the time. So, as I cannot keep it" (hiding her face in my breast) "I will give it to you. Take it. I am willing. . . . Then at least I shall lose it to a good honest lad, who will not make me ashamed afterwards. And when I have lost it, they will leave me alone; because when they come and say: 'Tiennette, I must take your maidenhead,' I shall say: 'Then go and find it, for I haven't got it.' Yes, Monsieur Nicolas, you must take it, so that I shan't die of grief because some one else does so."

I confess I did not know what to think. For a moment I had an idea that Tiennette was in love and subtle; that having yielded, she wanted to trick me into accepting her pregnancy as my doing. I even thought the plot might have been suggested by M. Parangon, or the foreman, or even the Comtois Degout, who was after her like the others. But I did not for long wrong her by this thought, and made answer: "I am flattered by your proposal, Tiennette, but it would be a mortal sin. Guard your virtue, and I will help you by staying in on Sundays and holidays, so as to be at hand whenever you call. Never go in to M. Parangon's room without Mlle Manon. When you make the foreman's bed, be quite sure he has gone out, and bolt the staircase door. During the week, keep close to Mlle Manon." "She's a fine protector!" exclaimed Tiennette. "I should blush for shame to repeat what she said about me at table yesterday in the presence of three men." "She is your only hope till Mme Parangon returns; I guarantee that Manon will protect you." "Perhaps she will, as it serves her own filthy interests. She doesn't need any begging to do what M. Parangon wants, I assure you. But let her do it as much as she likes, the trull, so long as he leaves a poor girl in peace, who belongs to a decent family. . . . You really think that I can protect myself like that, Monsieur Nicolas?" "I answer for your safety if you will take the precautions I have indicated." "Ah, how comforting you are, and how good to take pity on a poor girl like me." "It is because I too have good parents and am country-born like you, Tiennette; I have a good mother, and bear in mind the principles she taught me; a good father, who would never forgive me if I did anything really vile; though I have not always been well behaved. But vice is so ugly that the people who practise it here have given me a loathing for it." Tiennette listened with rapt attention, her pretty mouth half open. "Oh," she said at last, "now I see I am doubly in your debt, but mostly for refusing to take my virginity, because I only offered it to you out of despair. I shall trust you even more completely after this. . . . I only wanted to be left in peace. . . . M. Thibaut will also be very grateful for your protection, for I shall tell him that, but for you, he would never have had my virginity." Then I realised the full extent of her innocence. "How do you mean, left in peace? Did you think that when you had parted with your . . . flower, you would be left in peace?" "Yes, they would have left me alone, because that is all they want." "Oh, my dear child, how innocent you are! If you had yielded to one, he would have jeered about it to the others, and each would have wanted their turn. You would have become like those poor wretches of whom you have heard, who belong to everyone. . . ." Tiennette turned pale, and she nearly fainted. "Use your commonsense," I continued. "With anyone else, your offer would have been turned against yourself and you would have been . . . *dishonoured.* Trust no one as you have just trusted me: for though you have been here no time at all, you would already have been ruined." I saw I must speak plainly to this young girl, whose sincerity I no longer doubted. She could not make up her mind to leave me, she had been so thoroughly frightened. I had to go and work in the parlour so that I could hear if she were molested in the kitchen. When she went into the bedroom or the shop, she left all the doors open. Then at last I understood my Tiennette and my respect for her fortified my own good resolutions.

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*There is nothing extraordinary in Tiennette's use of this word. The best of the Morvandaises call a spade a spade. The following tale is told of the district: some vine-dressers were sleeping in a barn, and a lover took the greatest liberties with his mistress. She awoke exclaiming: "Who's fumbling at my b . m?" "It's me, Beurgite." "Ah, if it is you, Georgeot, fumble away, fumble away!"

[Know, you who read me, that my renunciation of these favours freely offered by a lovely girl, lovelier than you can imagine, still gives me exquisite pleasure. I protected Tiennette successfully, and I shall always rejoice in it. In the course of my life, I have helped three prostitutes back to honesty, saved a dozen girls and several women; and these memories are my delight, while I think with repentance of my many lapses; not for religious reasons, I am guiltless of that irrelevance, but because of the eternal law of reciprocity, which should stand first among the social virtues, and be the corner-stone of education. . . . *Zéphire*, O angel from above, how sweet the tears your memory provokes! But without your natural love of virtue, once you knew what virtue was, what would your memory bring me now? Remorse. . . . But events move on apace, and the sources whence I drew the *Paysan Perverti* will soon become apparent. Indeed he can be followed almost step by step in this narrative.]

At the time we have now reached I was working in the shop with Edme Rapenot of Chatillon-sur-Seine. He was young and seemed sensible enough, although unfortunately he had already become a Convulsionary. But was he even then, in spite of appearances, the malicious knave, the madman he became later? Whatever he was, I felt like one born again in the company of this man, who showed the greatest respect for the eternal laws of morality, praised what was good and, instead of glorying in vice, censured and pitied sinners. He spoke the language I was accustomed to, and at the same time acquainted me with many things of which I knew nothing. Tourangeot, the servant, was learning the shop work in his spare time. Edme was inquisitive, as very religious people always are; and tried to find out why I had left my brothers. He really considered them heretics, and M. de Caylus too, because they did not believe in the Sister Perrette's impassibility, or in the painless crucifixion of Brother Pancras, or in the salutary cudgelling of Sister Javotte's abundant bosom, or in the mystic infancy of Sister Scholastique, puling and mewling and dirtying her swaddling bands like a long-clothes baby, in order to bring back the infancy of Jesus for the brothers and sisters. I talked to him about Jeannette, and took pleasure in telling him the story of my unspoken love. He listened, wondering at the strength of my affection, and even more at its purity. He affirmed sincerely that it was altogether of the spirit and should be fostered, as it could not do otherwise than keep me in purity. And he added this notable remark: "Man is composed of a body and a soul. The purely spiritual love demanded by the moderate Jansenists, who have denied the *Miracles* and the *Work of the Almighty* (the *Convulsions*), is a chimera. It is a pity that this sister Jeannette, of whom you have given me such a high opinion, lives in your brothers' village where it is impossible to convert her. If she were here, or in Paris, you could become one in God, and in finding salvation together, experience a rapture beyond the understanding of the worldly." I was careful to say nothing about Marguerite. Indiscretion in such a case might have had serious consequences. . . . But I spoke about Tiennette, and in two days he had found means to place her in a pious household. She was succeeded by a girl as ugly as a demon whom he unearthed from somewhere, and all was peace.

*Saint Loup*, Bishop of Troyes, and friend of *Saint Germain* of Auxerre, is commemorated on the first of September. He is the patron saint of a parish in the latter town, adjoining and subject to the abbey of Saint Germain, and also of a village about a mile to the east on the south bank of the Yonne, called *Saint-Loup-en-Vaux.* On the Sunday following the saint's day there is a pilgrimage to Vaux, and all the townspeople join in it, feeling it a duty thus to display affection for their greatest saint's friend. Boudard and Tourangeot gave such a glowing account of the business that I decided to go with them. Happily I no longer had Tiennette to think of. We set out after dinner, each with twelve sous to spend. When we got to Vaux, we saw the *Messieurs* (as they call the journeymen at a master-printer's), who wanted to treat us. This was in compliment to Tourangeot, with whom they kept on good terms; for it was he who gave out the paper, and spread out the sheets after printing, etc., so that he could often be of use to them by saving their time and covering up a good many faults! But, by common consent, we refused with thanks, and tried to keep out of their way so as to be free. This was the first sensible thing I had ever known Boudard do. We ordered a fillet of pork for our lunch, and they brought us a pint of wine at two sous to go with it. While we were waiting for our good fare to be ready, we caught sight of a group of vine-dressers dancing to the singing of songs. We hurried to join them. Aimée, the cook, who had married Châtelain the cooper that very week, was in the dance with her husband, and we were at home at once. She caught sight of me, seized my hand and dragged me into the middle of the circle. There I saw a young vine-dresser; she had her back to me, but the figure, the style of dress and the very stuff of which it was made were Jeannette herself. I started. "Ah, Heavens! If it were she!" Trembling, I moved so that I could see her face. It was not Jeannette; but a second Jeannette:* it was *Edmée Servigné*! (You know her, Reader, from the *Paysan Perverti*). . . . Sweetness, innocence, and a divine artlessness; the colours of the rose melting into a dazzling whiteness; fine black eyes under well-arched brows as dark as ebony; a dainty mouth curving voluptuously into a charming smile; a slender waist, admirable legs, and a pretty foot, shod with all the taste of Jeannette or Marguerite – such was the girl who had made me tremble in the belief that she was Mlle Rousseau: but it was desire that quickened my heart when I saw Edmée Servigné. I approached her bashfully, and in a manner so different from Tourangeot's that she saw at once I was quite another kind of person. However she blushed and avoided me. Aimée Châtelain noticed my interest in the pretty Servigné, and whispered some-

*See the sixteenth illustration of the *Paysan-Paysanne.*

thing to *Catherine*, her elder sister, who was a buxom woman and very inviting, with a face that proclaimed her open nature, her boisterous gaiety, and her kind yet chaste heart. I did not realise who she was and, though she went out of her way to be civil, paid her little attention. I have a great admiration for women of her type, but they do not inspire me. I was engrossed with Edmée, seeing no one but her, following no one but her. . . . At last my good friend Aimée whispered to me: "I know what you are thinking, and you are right! Edmée Servigné is almost unique here for grace and goodness. And there is property there: her father has fourteen acres of vines, not to mention his other land. But be civil to her elder sister, who has already spoken to you two or three times." At this I blushed for my bad manners, and went and stood near Catherine, and, the first time she addressed me, was assiduous in my attentions. She tapped my shoulder with a pleasant smile (I found it pleasant since I knew her for Edmée's sister), and said in a low voice: "I wager some one has told you something to make you so civil." "Ah, Mademoiselle Catherine, it is also for your own sake!" "Good, that *also* saves the lie as well as a *perhaps*! But I have been hearing lots of nice things about you, which I should not have been so ready to believe, had they not come from Mme Châtelain, the cooper's wife. But I believe everything she says because I know she is not a liar; at any rate, when her husband was making love to her she did not hide anything from me!" "She is an excellent girl!" I exclaimed. "Say *woman* rather! . . . But you have used my father's favourite word. He always says 'excellent' when he approves of anything, and he is a great reader." "I should be enchanted to know such a worthy man." "If, as I do not doubt, you are all that Mme Châtelain says, you will not be ill-received by my father, or by his son, or by his two daughters!" She took my hand as she concluded, and led me to her brother, saying: "Servigné, do you know this gentleman?" "No, sister, I have not that honour." "And you, sister?" she added to her brother's wife. "No, neither do I, Cataud." "Well, it is Monsieur Nicolas, of whom Mme Châtelain talked so much on her marriage day and after." "Ah, Monsieur," said Servigné, "it is an honour to meet you, and tell you how much we respect you; including my father, who is an honest God-fearing man." The introduction completed, Catherine, who still held my hand, pulled me into the ring which was forming for a dance. I was overcome with surprise. Mme Châtelain must have praised me to the skies! I heard afterwards that Catherine had been most impressed by my conduct in warning Aimée, that time when she was asleep in an unguarded attitude, and exposed by Manon the Parisian to the lustful glances of the workmen; and that this alone would have made her offer me her sister in marriage if she had dared. Eternal Order, which is God, has willed that each good action should bear fruit. When this incident was related, in the presence of her father, her sister, her brother, and her sister-in-law, Catherine had said: "Enough! I would trust myself naked to that boy, by night or by day, without fear, and my sister Edmée too. He's a fine lad." Catherine placed me between herself and her sister. "Give Monsieur Nicolas your hand, Edmée," she said. The lovely brunette blushed at the mention of my name, and shyly offered me her hand, and we danced and sang. Everyone knows *rounds*; the words are free enough, but those with double meanings are sung so innocently by our Burgundian girls that no one minds. This is the round to which we danced first: I have not forgotten it.

*There was a fine fellow*
*Sold turnips in town,*

**So fat and so bonny,*
**So long and well-grown!*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

**So fat and so bonny,*
**So long and well-grown,*
*That a woman came up*
*To buy one for her own*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

*That a woman came up*
*To buy one for her own,*
**Took the biggest and popped it*
**Away in her gown*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

**Took the biggest and popped it*
**Away in her gown,*
*But her stays were so large*
**That the turnip slipped down*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

*But her stays were so large*
**That the turnip slipped down*
**And came to a little room*
**Covered in brown*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

**And came to a little room*
**Covered in brown*

*And knocked at the door*
*And uncovered his crown*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

*And knocked at the door*
*And uncovered his crown,*
*And when he got in*
*How he raged up and down!*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

*And when he got in*
*How he raged up and down*
**And swept all the corridors*
**Clean with his gown!*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

**And swept all the corridors*
**Clean with his gown*
*Till passing the kitchen*
**He sent the pot prone*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

*Till passing the kitchen*
**He sent the pot prone*
*And the cook cried: "O sir,*
*Just look what you've done!"*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

*And the cook cried: "O sir,*
*Just look what you've done,*

**You've spilled all the sauce*
*And you'd better begone!"*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!*

**"You've spilled all the sauce*
*And you'd better begone!"*
*"Yes, that is the custom,*
*I willingly own,*
*With buy my fine turnips,*
*My fine sugar turnips!"*

The whole company joined in the song, without self-consciousness and without seeing anything below the surface. Châtelain was leader. But I noticed that Edmée did not sing any of the lines marked by an asterisk. Although she did not quite understand them, her modesty took fright and would not be committed, and certain of the words were too coarse for her pretty mouth.

After the dance Boudard, who was by nature indifferent to women and had only left our table for a moment, came to tell us the meal was ready. We were hungry and hurried after him, bringing M. and Mme Châtelain, Edmée and Catherine, and their brother and sister-in-law along with us. It was very difficult to get Edmée to come. She only consented after her sister had exclaimed: "Gracious goodness, Edmée, it'll be a good thing when you're not so particular! M. Nicolas is not going to eat you." The shy beauty lowered her eyes, and allowed me to take her trembling hand, saying only: "My father is due, and I wanted to wait for him on the road." To avoid sitting beside me on the grass, she moved away, only to be scared by the bold glances of the Tartar Tourangeot, by Boudard's self-possession, and by Châtelain's teasing; the place between her brother and sister-in-law was taken by Catherine, so she was finally obliged to return and sit between Aimée Châtelain and me. She was still standing up when Châtelain, putting his arm behind his wife, seized the bottom of her skirt and gave it a tug, saying: "Zounds, my girl, sit down!" This alarming gesture brought her to the ground like a flash. "It's just the place for a little fusser like you," he added. "Serve you right!" murmured Catherine, nodding her head. My wife is here," he went on, "if she weren't there might be something to talk about! As it is, what are you grumbling about? Your friend is on one side, and a very girl for propriety on the other, if that's what suits you! for . . ." "O, please be quiet, M. Châtelain," said Edmée, "because . . . I am sorry for all women, who . . ." "Are you sorry for yourself, little wife?" said the cooper. "Oh no, my dear, how could I be?" and she kissed him. After that Edmée Servigné did not dare to look at them again, but turned to me with a little shamefaced smile. (Yes, I am sure that if I had ever got to know Jeannette Rousseau her conduct would have been just the same as Edmée Servigné's. I did not love two girls successively, but the same girl. One was Jeannette seen from afar; the other was Jeannette on acquaintance, whose conversation I understood, as I understood her beautiful mind. No, I have never loved but one woman, as I shall prove; for I shall often return to this idea.)

Boudard carved. It would seem that Edmée had found a way into even his ice-bound heart, as he was more civil and restrained than usual. Love calls us to good manners. The unprincipled Tartar, on the contrary, radiated lubricity. However, he had his Marie (though she was not present) and I no more feared him as a rival than Boudard. I was the waiter, and served Edmée first; but with an air of unconcern and merely as my neighbour; then I handed a plate to her sister, then to her sister-in-law. Tourangeot waited on Mme Châtelain, her husband and Servigné. Boudard poured out wine for all, with the frank gaiety of the Burgundian host even when he is entertaining strangers. We all began to eat. There were only three pewter mugs, and I disposed them so as to avoid sharing with Tourangeot, or with Boudard whose lungs were said to be affected. Aimée took charge of our cup; I always drank after Edmée, who mixed her wine with three parts of water from the stream by which we sat. I did the same, and Mme Châtelain, leaning behind me, said to Edmée, "He always does that," and kissed her. It was an exquisite moment. Love held out happiness to me, while Friendship courted a sweet maid on my behalf, in whom I found again my lost Jeannette. Edmée lowered her eyes; but I thought I could see that she was not displeased to have me next her. I talked to her of sensible, decent, and agreeable things; in the first I showed myself a man, in the second a girl, and in the third a lover. Tourangeot, on the other hand, allowed himself some coarse remarks in talking to Mme Châtelain, on the pretext that she was a married woman; and I noticed with inexpressible pleasure that on each occasion Edmée hastened to say something to me, so as not to hear. How fair a thing is the instinctive decency of a girl, who covers herself with modesty as with a veil! It is the very enchantment of nature.

We were just finishing our meal, and Catherine and Mme Châtelain had already proposed a game of *Curé* – a kind of forfeits, which everyone knows – when Edmée caught sight of her father. "Here's father," she said to her brother. Servigné hastened to meet the old man, and brought him over to us. He told his children he had lunched with a friend, and had come on to enjoy himself for a little with us. Catherine allotted our places. [I will not describe this game, although I could, as I always noted every evening what had happened during the day, a habit I still retain. This incident is briefly described in the *Drame de la Vie*, pages 64-76. I will only add what I was obliged to omit in that work, from the last words on page 75.]

The game went on a long time, as everybody enjoyed it. To recover her last forfeit, Mme Châtelain had to give us a song. "What shall I sing?" she asked her husband. "Anything you like, wife, so long as it is not too old. Sing us:

*What mournful mood . . .*"

"Oh, no! That's a monk's song and I hate monks!" "Then sing:

*My first man was a dark man."*

"Oh fie, for shame! I never had one but you." "Then sing what you like. Stop, I have it!

*Despair, despair,*
*Pray, dearest father, pray for me!*
. . . . . . .
*In what a state you found me there*
*Last night*
*When I was looking for a flea!*
. . . . . . .
*I saw . . . a . . . place . . . all . . ."*

Aimée shut her husband's mouth with difficulty, crying: "No, no! Not that one!" "Well, then, this one; I want it and you must sing it, or I shall be cross with you." "Which one, dear man?" "The *Joli Chose*." "Oh, my dear!" "I am getting cross!" "All right then; but it is only to please you:

*Now let the sailor who would clip the world*
*Between the gods of land and sea be hurled,*
*My lesser conquest that I'll not regret*
*Is a little dainty Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet.* (bis)

*Now let the scholar sit in solitude*
*His nose to Seneca or Plato glued,*
*All that I know how blithely I'd forget*
*For a little dainty Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet.*

*Now in his lordly palace let finance*
*Yawn and do mischief to the State of France,*
*I'm happier in a narrow grange beset*
*By a little dainty Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet.*

*Old Father Adam who gave all things birth*
*And was the wisest man alive on earth*
*Was also first of us his faith to set*
*On a little dainty Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet.*

*Sweet prisoner before a judge austere,*
*There's but one way if you would come off clear,*
*There's but one way with him, and 'tis to let*
*Him see a dainty Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet.*

*'Tis our French boast that masters of assize*
*Should virtue under beauty recognise*
*And not refuse to fall into the net*
*Of a little dainty Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet.*

*The happy man who's envied by the crowd*
*Is not the King whose laws abash the proud,*

*No, Iris, 'tis the man who's going to get*
*A peep at a small Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet.*

*The fate of young Narcissus now I plain*
*To whom excess of beauty was a pain;*
*Youth, let your glass be no pool lone and wet*
*But a little dainty Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet.*

*And if the hemming should be fair not dark,*
*Which often happens, as you may remark,*
*It will suffice as well as ever yet*
*A little dainty Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet.*

*Come, little abbés, ladies light and fair,*
*Who always ask me for the latest air,*
*Here's one that but last night I did beget*
*Beside a dainty Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet.*

*I do not pray for fortune's gifts to come,*
*Such vain parade to me were wearisome;*
*The only wealth that's worth the moil and sweat*
*Is a little dainty Chose*
*All satin rose*
*And hemmed about with jet."*

"Ah, that's a good song!" exclaimed Boudard. "Mm," said M. Servigné, "it's one of those new songs by some Paris spark." "I couldn't understand a word of it," cried Tourangeot, "though it's the second time

I've heard it." "You were not the only one," said Catherine, looking at her sister. "Mlle Manon brought it from Paris," said the singer. "She said it was quite new, and sang it at dinner one evening before ten people, five of whom were respectable women." During the discussion of this song, which no one had dared to spread abroad in the town, and which Manon had got from its author who did not publish it till long after, I was watching Edmée Servigné; and saw from the calm expression on her lovely face, the mirror of a still more lovely soul, that she had understood it no more than Tourangeot. Innocence and stupidity are alike in this, that the one does not understand doubtful play on words; and the lofty candour of the other chooses the better interpretation.

We were still talking when Boudard, who was not a bad fellow at bottom, but rather a badly brought up child led astray by his companions (which is quite enough to ruin a boy before he can think for himself), Boudard, I say, went in search of the workmen, who were having their meal, and said to them: "We have some likely girls with us and are just leaving here. You follow." Père Servigné had told his children that it was time to be going. I walked with Edmée and Catherine. As we were climbing the hill, an incident occurred which convinced the workmen, especially the Parisians, that what Boudard had said was true. We met some drunken vine-dressers from Petite-rue-Saint-Germain, where Edmée and her family lived, and one of them, not noticing M. Servigné who was behind his daughters, hit me on the arm to make me leave go of Edmée. Tourangeot saw the blow and leapt upon the ruffian, who had already been startled by a kick from the old man. I ran to his aid and we got the whole lot down, one of them rolling from top to bottom of the hill. Edmée, all trembling, divided her attention between her father, her brother and me, and finally managed to pull us out of the scuffle when we had taken our revenge. I offered her my arm again proudly and noticed that, whereas before she had scarcely touched it, now she leaned upon it, and clung to me as though in fear lest I should escape again.

We were half-way home and night was falling, when the printers accosted us. One of them seized Edmée, who uttered a cry and slipped out of his grasp like a fish. Catherine boxed the ears of Degout, who had put his hand on the neckerchief covering her breast. Then Aimée Châtelain came up, and M. Servigné recognised Yeury, whose wife was a distant relative of his, and we realised that Boudard was at the bottom of the mischief: he had wanted his revenge for a whipping with a bunch of nettles. Everyone scouted him. But in the meanwhile Edmée Servigné had disappeared with her brother and sister-in-law; Catherine had followed, and it was in vain I tried to find them. They were lost in the crowd.

The day after this outing, Châtelain was sent for to work at Joigny again. He took his wife with him, and she was not sorry to leave a town where she was known, on account of her condition. And I did not know the address of Edmée, my new Jeannette and lovely as the first, with whom I had become better acquainted in a day than with the other in four years.

So true is it that it was Mlle Rousseau I loved in Mlle Servigné, as a lover loves the portrait of his mistress, that I made no attempt to find Edmée. My head was full of Jeannette for the rest of that September and my love for her was more intense than ever. Pretty little Servigné had produced the same effect as if I had seen Mlle Rousseau herself; surprising and strange perhaps, yet the natural consequence of a genuine love united with an ardent temperament. So I remained until the coming of that one so passionately though almost unconsciously, desired – desired as though I had foreseen all that was to happen. . . . But before I speak of the return of Mme Parangon, which was to influence my whole life, I must describe the last mishap which befell me in connection with my brothers of Courgis.

It was brought about by a letter in verse which I imprudently wrote and, still more imprudently, sent to Mlle Rousseau. We have reached the eighteenth of October. One evening when all the workmen were *incapacitated,* with the exception of Clisot, the foreman pressman, I sat down near the latter's press to take advantage of his light, and began to string together octosyllabic lines which, if I remember, ran smoothly enough. I described all that had happened to me since I left Courgis, declared my constancy to Jeannette, and vowed never to love any but her. When I had filled four large pages I read my verses aloud, finding them passably good and, taking fire, as I always did when I thought about Jeannette, I wound up with a stanza, the last three lines of which I had written to her while at Courgis.

*"Believe me, this*
*Is all my bliss*
*To know that you are mine."*

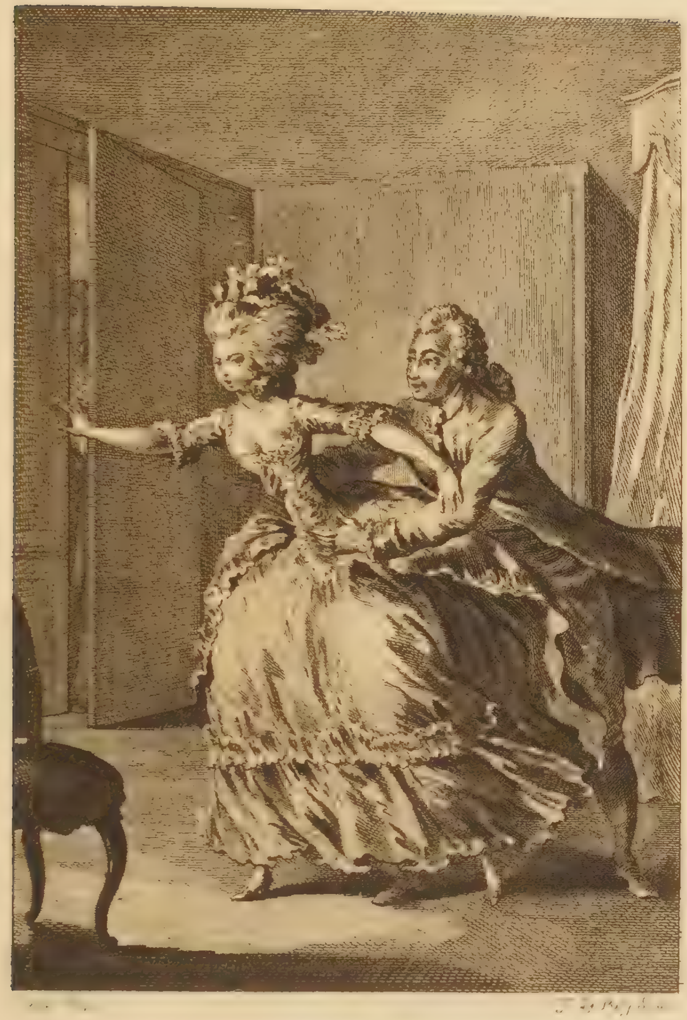
No thought of what had happened to me before could deter me from taking it at once to the grocer's shop, where letters for Courgis were collected. I was reading Villedieu's romances at the time, wherein everything is left to chance, and a woman's slightest gesture is an almost certain indication that she loves to madness. I persuaded myself that I was beloved, that Marguerite had beyond doubt spoken plainly to the fair Jeannette, and that my long silence might be taken for forgetfulness. Yet it seems incredible, since I am neither mad nor stupid, that I should not have devised some means for delivering my letter secretly. I foolishly posted it, like any other letter, addressed to a young girl at her parents' house. My letter despatched I was full of joy. I never dreamt of what might be done by my brothers, who would not regard its purity as any excuse for my passion. I never reflected that a letter of such a kind, addressed, without any preliminaries, to their daughter, would shock Jeannette's parents. All this never occurred to me: I behaved just as if everything had changed at Courgis since I had come to Auxerre; as if religious fanatics would regard my boyish passion with benevolence, and M. Rousseau be charmed because a very incompetent little apprentice had thrown the handkerchief to his daughter. I even, such was my obsession, impatiently awaited a reply! (And yet my folly might have been the greatest wisdom, and brought happiness alike to me and to Jeannette. She would have settled my future and focussed my affections and preserved my innocence! Poor feeble mortals! How much we are to be pitied, when our wisdom is often folly and our folly wisdom!) At the end of a fortnight I had an even madder idea. I was going home for All Saints' Day and determined to go by way of Courgis. I was friendly enough with Tourangeot at the time, and I proposed to raise his opinion of my importance in two ways: by making him see and marvel at Jeannette's beauty and my happiness in her favour, and by giving him an idea of my father's position in the district. (Jupiter fulfilled one part of my intention and delivered the other to the scattering winds.)

We set out after dinner on Sunday the 31st of October. To begin with, it was unwise to visit ecclesiastics on a festival; they were not only busy themselves, but taught their flock that to travel on such a day was to profane it. But I seemed to have forgotten everything. I was like the son of a poor peasant in our neighbourhood, who spent three weeks in Paris on his way back from Saint-Michel, and, seeing wealth and comfort on every side, got it into his head that everything had changed for the better. He hurried home and, directly he was on Sacy land, this traveller from afar accosted the first labourer he met: "Tell me, you man, is my father still in the fields with his asses?" The labourer and his mate, astonished because the fellow pretended not to recognise them after a six weeks' absence, replied laughing, "Oh yes, Monsieu', your father is just the same." "And Sacy houses are still roofed with thatch just the same?" "Just the same." "And the people eat black bread just the same?" "Just the same." "And they are just as poor as ever?" "Just the same." "Then everything is just the same?" "Everything." "Everything? It's incredible. . . . Goodbye, you men." With that the young rascal turned back the way he had come and went straight to Paris, where he made his fortune. In the same way I, Monsieur Nicolas, accounted not unintelligent in my native place, imagined that the evil ways, the vices I have faithfully described, had, after so brief a sojourn in the town, become the general thing; and that the countryfolk, even pious fanatics, were less strait-laced than they used to be. Things at which I should have blushed eighteen months before, now appeared quite natural.

We arrived during vespers: the procession was just passing through the churchyard, and I saw Jeannette. I was by the presbytery door and I was smiling. When Mlle Rousseau saw me, she did not blush, she turned pale. I had some foreboding of what was to come, but it was nowhere near the reality. Sister Pinon caught sight of us, and left the church to come to us. "Gracious Heavens!" she exclaimed, "you dare to show yourself here after your letter? . . . M. Rousseau wanted to prosecute you, and was going to take advice in Chablis had not M. Stallin dissuaded him. So judge of the curé's anger!" As she finished this terrible speech, the abbé Thomas came in. His manner did not surprise me after what I had just heard. I felt I ought to make some apology. "You will only make things worse," he said. "I will say no more in front of this gentleman. But leave as soon as you have had something to drink. The least my brother threatens is a thrashing." I must confess that to have earned this treatment depressed and humiliated me, less because of what I had done in itself than for my incredible stupidity in coming among people I knew so well, after a serious offence which my clumsiness had inevitably made public. I had assumed that my letter would remain a secret, and that only Jeannette would see it. It was a case of unexampled simplicity; and in my whole life I have never met anyone over six years of age capable of its like. If I had been alone I should have fled at once, without eating or drinking; but Tourangeot was thirsty. He insisted on having my crime explained to him. "Is that all? Why that's a bit tame! I thought he had at least slept with both mother and daughter, like my officer at Tournay!" Then, a true Tartar, he made ribald jests about the father's anger, the girl's distress, the curé's indignation, the abbé's stupefaction, and Sister Pinon's qualms. "You wouldn't have got on well in Flanders, any of you. When we met a farmer's daughter there, or anyone else's for that matter, it was: 'Lie down there!' and when we did not hand her over to the camp-followers afterwards, she kissed our hands and thanked us for our goodness." And he tossed off his wine. Then he chucked Sister Pinon under the chin, and pulled down her neckerchief. I saw the time coming when the abbé would be calling the whole village to the rescue. I was distressed by his behaviour, which aggravated my own folly and misconduct. They urged us to go, and I asked nothing better. At last we got away and I took the road to Sacy. As we had three full leagues to go, whether we went home or returned to town, Tourangeot made no objection, although night was falling.

Once we had escaped I walked briskly, as our snack at Courgis had not made me feel heavy. I reproached Tourangeot for his lack of decency. He replied with more sense than I should have expected: "I was furious with your brothers for turning us out for such a trifle as a letter. And as for that Sister! She didn't tempt me in the least, although she was fresh enough. Still I would like to have got her in the camp at Tournay! Ah, how . . . Then that smug of an abbé! Faith, I could hardly control myself. With nice people, I am as well-behaved as needs be. But the only thing for that sort is to give them a taste of the sabre if they whine at a stick, as we did in Flanders. Besides, seeing what I am like they will be grateful to you for being no worse." This last remark was true philosophy! By the time we reached Puitsdebond, which is about half-way, night had fallen, and we were hungry and thirsty. In one of the houses of this tiny hamlet we could hear labourers singing and making merry. We thought it was a tavern, although I had never before seen one in such an out-of-the-way spot, and Tourangeot knocked. The door opened: "Who is it?" "Could we have half a pint of wine if we paid for it?" "Certainly, Messieurs, a pint if you like. But you must not pay, or we shall have the excise men after us." We went in and, before accepting a pint, felt in our pockets to see how much money we had. I had two sous and a half, my comrade rather more. We wanted to know the price of the wine, but in the meanwhile we had been scrutinized, and I was recognised by my features, which are somewhat like my father's and the curé's. Instead of replying to our question, an old man took me by the arm, and said: "Isn't it a son of Monsieur *Reûti*?" "Yes, sir." Then they all exclaimed together: "Ah, Restif the Upright!" They seized us in spite of ourselves, put us near the fire, and gave us the choicest of their food, fresh pork and sausage. Tourangeot looked at me in astonishment, and, shallow-minded ruffian though he was, said: "Back there we got a welcome for what you had done, here for what your father has done. There's a little difference, eh?" He wanted to sit down to table, as the food tempted him. But I told the good people that we could not stop, as my father would be anxious. The mention of my father was enough to make them let us go, after Tourangeot had taken five or six mugs of wine and some mouthfuls of food. Every time they raised their mugs, they drank in chorus to the health of Restif the Upright, heaping blessings upon us and upon him. When we came out we found two sons of the house, who had disappeared a moment before, mounted bare-back on two horses and leading two others saddled with straw, for Tourangeot and myself. It was almost impossible to make them accept our refusal, but we spoke with such decision that they confined themselves to escorting us as far as *Metairie-rouge* or *Charmelieu,* on account of the dense woods and savage dogs about that farm. The dogs did in fact attack us; but as the Puits-debond lads knew them, they kept them quiet until we had crossed the little plain of Charmelieu, and then returned home singing. Tourangeot marvelled at our welcome, and could not stop talking about it.

As we were passing Laloge, where Marie-Jeanne lived, I said to my companion: "You see that light about fifty paces away? If I chose to knock there, you would see an even warmer welcome." "Then knock! I'm dying of thirst." "No, no, only half a league more and we shall be at home, just as they are sitting down to table." "But suppose your brothers have got at them, and they too turn us out?" "Never fear! A mother and father do not turn away their child. They reprove him, but they do not desert him." "I advise supper here. Is there a bed too?" "Just as at home." Hearing this he ran and banged on the door, and I was obliged to follow. One of the



sons opened it, and though he only saw Tourangeot, he addressed him civilly, and asked him to come in. But as soon as he saw me, he ran to me with open arms and bore me into the house, where we found his father and mother, his other brother, and their charming sister. The whole family was overjoyed at seeing me. They gave us wine, and were laying our places, when I said: "They will be anxious about us at home," and at once Mère Lévêque exclaimed: "Then be off, children; unless you would like Georges to go and tell them you are here, and will pass the night with us? But if one of my boys stopped the night only half a league from home, I know what I should think of the people who kept him!" Tourangeot left the table and warm fire with regret. But he had seen, by the way I was made much of, how fond they were of me in that house. I forbade the two Lévêque boys to accompany us home, although their sweet sister begged me to allow it. I kissed her hand on leaving, a courtesy never practised in the district. It made her almost ashamed, and she would gladly have embraced me. We parted with mutual regret.

A few paces beyond Laloge, Tourangeot said: "Something is bothering me: were we welcomed that time for your own or for your father's sake?" "For both." "And that pretty girl, eh?" "She was my mistress." "Was! And you were mad about Edmée Servigné? And you have just been chased out of Courgis for writing a love-letter to yet another girl?" "I thought I loved Marie-Jeanne just as I thought I loved Edmée Servigné at Vaux, and all the time I loved no one but the girl for whom I have been driven away." "I foresee that Courgis affair will never come to much. But this one, or Edmée even, but rather this one. . . . Oh, I wish I were in your place! . . . But I have nothing, poor devil. . . . I never minded about it until to-night. . . ." "But you've got your Marie?" "What luck!" "Now

I understand! You criticise me, and would do the same yourself." "Then I will say no more; because I should certainly leave Marie for that girl." We arrived at my father's house just on eight o'clock. They were having supper later than usual, because my father read a longer portion from the Bible on Sundays, especially when several festivals had come together. They were surprised that I arrived so late. "What time did you leave?" "After dinner." We said nothing at first about Courgis. The only thing that mattered to me was to escape reproof for the moment; as I was convinced that, the longer it was delayed, the milder it would be. They made us get thoroughly warm, and then sat down to table. Tourangeot loved wine, and my father's was exceptionally good, as it was carefully made. He tasted it and found it excellent. There was roast fowl, jugged hare, a pie and dessert. When Tourangeot had satisfied his appetite, he looked at me, and said: "Faith, I'm glad we did not accept the two suppers we were so kindly offered on our way." "Where was that?" asked my father. "I don't know their names," returned Tourangeot quickly, "but they were good folk." "Which way did you come?" asked my father a second time. "By Courgis." "Oh, then you saw your brothers?" "Only one," replied Tourangeot. "Yes," exclaimed my father, "the other one never leaves the church on Sundays and saints' days." "So much the better," exclaimed the cursed chatterbox. "How so?" "Oh, nothing, nothing. I would rather have all sisters than brothers like that, so as to be an only son! . . . But I must keep my mouth shut." "You got a bad welcome?" asked my father laughing. "The worst!" "That is only because they are vexed with Nicolas for some little peccadillos." "Oh, so your father knows!" said Tourangeot, looking at me. I was on thorns. "Yes, yes! Don't say any more about it. I do not want to talk to my father about that now." "But he knows!"

replied Tourangeot. "You may well call it a peccadillo, Monsieur Restif, a mere bagatelle, a trifle . . . a matter of few verses. . . . But, to make up for it, we had a warm welcome elsewhere. . . . Ha, welcome! I never had a better, save here! Think, we had scarcely a penny between us. I counted on him and he counted on me. But we found that all the time we had credit which would have been good for eight days' travelling in a compass of three or four leagues round, or ten for all I know, and we eating and drinking of the best." "Ha, ha," laughed my father, "and what had you to show to get such good credit." "Nothing to show, but something to say." "Then say it." And turning to me, "Your friend is good company! He can make one laugh. But you look uncomfortable, Nicolas, what's the matter?" . . . (I was trembling for what Tourangeot would blurt out next!) "Nothing, father, I am only tired." "Come then, you had better go to bed." "I'm in no hurry," cried Tourangeot. "So much the worse," I thought, "the confounded babbler won't stop talking till he has told them everything." "And your credit?" continued my father. "It was your name, Monsieur Restif." "Oh, how was that?" Then Tourangeot described the scene at Puitsdebond in his own way (but his relation proved that some things are always beautiful whoever tells them and however told): our welcome by the good folk who recognised me by the family likeness; the toasts to his health; the exclamation repeated over and over: "He's an honest man, is Monsieur Reûti of Sacy." At the conclusion of this narrative, all rough and unpolished as it was, Edme wept tears of joy, and the whole family, children and servants alike, fell into admiration. Thus encouraged, I added the more delicate touches which had escaped my less sensitive companion. I saw the best of fathers overwhelmed with joy and went to bed well-content, after a day which had scarcely promised so happy an evening.

Tourangeot must have talked more openly next day, for I received an indirect reprimand. But he had spoken in confidence, and his confidence was respected. Besides, though strict in matters of conduct, my father saw that I had been guilty of indiscretion rather than anything worse; for no one ever understood me as well as my father. Also his veiled reproof turned chiefly on want of thought; and the impropriety of certain actions done through inexperience, presumption or heedlessness. Oh that my father were still on earth to guide me in my present troubles! His wise counsel would have been my safeguard in the thorny way through which I pass with faltering steps.

My friends from Laloge dined with us that day, and I had occasion to admire my father's wisdom and kindness. He gave Marie-Jeanne the most flattering welcome, convinced that my wounded heart would turn at once to her, and without danger, owing to our long inevitable separation. But this behaviour, admirable for me, proved unintentionally disastrous to the sweet girl, who felt doubly assured that she could count on me. During the day I noticed the distinction she made between Monsieur Nicolas and other lads. Tourangeot and two other unmarried guests, come on some matter of arbitration, wooed her favour, but she received their compliments with cold reserve . . . and took refuge with me from their importunities. For me her voice was soft and shy; and her face and manner expressed a radiant trust. It was as though she said: "Now I am near to my husband, the man to whom I belong, and to whom I owe my heart's affection; he will defend me against you, and I place myself under his protection. Thanks, O wise Nature, for making women shy and confiding and men bold and courageous! For thus do the two sexes find happiness together. . . ." (In Paris, alas, it is quite otherwise; the men are weak and bashful, the women bold and enterprising. Yet people gape their surprise when such unnatural marriages do not bring happiness!) . . . I believed myself again in love with Marie-Jeanne . . . but all I loved was the sex, the age, the figure of Jeannette! . . . Edmée Servigné had this divine likeness in greater perfection; and Mme Parangon had even more than Jeannette herself of that nymph-like quality which had made me adore the fair Courgisienne. And my affection for these has never died; I have always cherished their memory and do so still. When I recall Edmée and Marie-Jeanne, and the youth which they adorned, my heart is troubled and my tears fall. It was a happy day. Tourangeot saw my father in all his glory, as arbitrator for the district; and even Marie-Jeanne and her mother found this entertaining. Tourangeot spoke to me very seriously: "In truth, Monsieur Nicolas, I cannot imagine how the son of such a father came to be a printer's apprentice!" We left next day, which was All Souls' Day, at dawn, so as to arrive by midday.

After this visit, Tourangeot, who had always scoffed at me because M. Parangon made fun of me, began to show me some respect and to treat me with consideration. He never wearied of praising my parents; commending their courtesy, good breeding, open-hearted frankness, and hospitality. Even M. Parangon was astonished, when he described how he himself had seen more than thirty persons gather for audience, from villages round about over which my father's probity alone had made him judge and arbitrator, and was told that this happened every Sunday and feast-day. After that, Tourangeot added, he was no longer surprised by our reception in a district where I was recognised as my father's son. Then he spoke of my dear mother, and of my pretty sweetheart and her respectable parents. "Then why has the fellow come here?" asked the master.

"Why leave a happy home, to put up with all he has had to endure and will have to endure here? Has he an eye on succeeding me?" "His father, Monsieur," replied the Tartar, "has taught him first and foremost to be patient and obedient when it is necessary." This speech, worthy of a better man, struck M. Parangon, and, from that time, his manner so far changed to me that he never again threatened me with a thrashing. He spoke to me as to a man, even when administering a merited reproof. Tourangeot was too much of a chatterbox not to describe my brothers' reception also, and its cause; but the morals of the town were such that I had no occasion to blush for this. For some time past I had won a measure of respect from the workmen, by my reserve, by my knowledge of Latin, which put me in a position to be of service to the foreman, a clever workman but unlearned, and, above all, by the compliments which my love-letters won for their supposed authors. This respect was increased by Tourangeot's recital; to such a point, indeed, that one day when Courtois, one of the men, was drunk, he said to his fellows, hiccupping: "The . . . only thing . . . I mind . . . is that M'sieu' Nicolas . . . should see me . . . like this!" I had already been put to reading proofs, even the last revises (which are usually a foreman's work), because they needed literary knowledge rather than manual skill. But I still waited on the workmen, passing from the noblest part of the typographic art, to the humblest and most degraded. I swept out the printing-house, picked up the fallen type from under the workmen's feet, and sorted the rubbish. However I fulfilled such duties with no feeling of disgust, as they were useful in themselves and helped to harden my character. So far from following Boudard's example and letting the rubbish accumulate for my successor, I disposed of every atom, prompted by that love of order which I have never lost. Then I would turn eagerly to the work of composing. The foreman had been keeping his eye on me, but made no remark until at table, one day, the conversation turned on myself and my family, when he uttered these words before our Paris Manon: "M. Parangon has found a treasure in Nicolas. He takes pains with everything he does, and loves work. And I am ready to take Tourangeot's word for what we have been told of his parents, since only the best parents in the world bring up their children as Nicolas has been brought up. I can honestly say that I have never seen his equal as an apprentice, and it is to be expected that when he is a printer he will not have his equal as a workman." M. Parangon was amazed, and mentioned my alleged idleness. "Oh, yes," answered the foreman, throwing up his hands, "but you know all about those gentry; one is never finished: not only errands, but letters, messages. . . ." "I thought," interrupted M. Parangon, "that the apprentices only went out once for the men's breakfast and once for what they have in the afternoon?" "Impossible; the apprentice is afraid of them. Would you like him to make you dizzy by running to you every other moment to say that he is being sent out? And if he is ill-treated, are you going to compensate him for a kick that some brute has given him? Are you going to dismiss your workmen? My advice is to leave things as they are and get a new boy as quickly as you can. I grudge the waste of Nicolas's time."

Impudent Manon, who was present, blushed for shame, so Tourangeot told me. My life became easier, and Manon went out of her way to be civil; but her plans, of which I was well aware, were upset. On the 22nd of November, my birthday and the completion of my seventeenth year, the mistress of the house arrived from Paris.

You will love this woman, honest and intelligent Reader; you will adore her as I adored her. As Tourangeot described the incident of Restif the Upright to my father, so I shall speak without art, and the picture of Mme Parangon will touch you more deeply for it. You will find no polished eloquence to make the character show unreal; she shall come before you simple and unadorned by art; a heaven-born creature endowed by nature with every charm and every virtue; made to be queen, and queen in my heart until I die. She will give you a more lofty, more sublime conception of human nature.

*"Madame Parangon!"* The name still rings in my ear. I was working; but I did as the others did, and left my work – I, who never let anything interfere with it. I went downstairs; but timidly, behind the others. My eyes had to seek for her by reason of the crowd of workmen. Tiennette was with her. Although I had become somewhat more critical of beauty during my stay in the town, I thought her the most charming person I had ever seen in my life; she triumphed even over Jeannette, over the lovely, the appealing Edmée. She had a word for everyone. She greeted the workmen one by one. My turn came; but she could not see me. "Where is the new pupil?" she asked her husband. "I will call him," said the foreman, "because . . . ," then he saw me and made me come forward. "There he is," said M. Parangon, "he will do something one day." "I agree with you!" said the foreman. I bowed: "Madame, I have the honour to congratulate you on a safe return to your house," I said, and hid away behind the others. "Thank you very much, Monsieur Nicolas . . . but where is he?" "He is hiding," said squint-eyed Degout ironically. "Talent is modest." "Degout never wants anyone to have more talent than himself," said the foreman acidly. "He grudges it to everyone else," added Floriaux, and the foreman continued: "Degout has intelligence and some learning. Nicolas may have

less intelligence and less knowledge, but I think he will make good use of what he has." "I think so, too," said Madame Parangon, in a low voice, "or he would not be true to his family." Tiennette greeted me, and took me aside. "Madame knows about you already. I did not get on well in the place your Convulsionary found for me; but they took me with them to Paris, and I made use of this to find Madame, who has taken me back again. . . . There is no risk now."

All the neighbours came to pay homage to Mme Parangon as soon as her arrival was known; and I saw with joyful wonder and something like pride how much she was loved. By what instinct did I already take her merits to myself? . . .

Imagine a tall woman* admirably proportioned; a face wherein beauty blended with nobility and majesty was tempered by the enticing prettiness peculiar to Frenchwomen; a pale complexion warmed by animation; fine silky hair, ash-blond; well-marked and well-arched eyebrows, almost black; admirable blue eyes, whereof the long and veiling lashes gave her that modest, that angelic air which is beauty's greatest charm. Her voice was shy and sweet, with sonorous cadences to touch the heart; her walk voluptuous yet modest; her beautiful rounded breasts were almost shoulder-high; her hands soft without being plump; a perfect arm; a leg as beautiful as any man's, and the daintiest foot in shape and size ever possessed by pretty woman. . . . She dressed with exquisite and much admired taste; to the simplest clothes she lent the conquering charm of Venus's cincture, which no one can resist. She could have made the most fantastic stuffs a fashion. Her affable and winning manner was the most attractive

*She was only five feet and four inches in height, but her dignity and the noble carriage of her head made her appear taller, while leaving her all the dainty graces of medium stature.

of her qualities, and endeared her to those whose sex did not compel to adoration.

Such was Colette on her arrival from Paris. I stood lost in admiration after everyone else had drifted off, seeing and hearing none but her. No one noticed me, for I was leaning against a wall in the dark passage between the parlour and the shop. Madame Parangon said to Tiennette, who was helping her with her wraps: "I was very pleased with what you told me about my young compatriot. I see he is a well-behaved, honourable young man." "O Madame, there never was a properer lad or a better." "I take an interest in him, both as a pupil here, and as a son of my father's friend. . . . Where is he?" These words brought me to myself, and I entered. "Come here, Monsieur Nicolas," said the mistress. "You are a son of one of my father's friends, and deserve to be ours too. My husband is satisfied with you and so is the foreman. You will understand how much that pleases me since it was I who suggested this apprenticeship to your parents. I had heard something about your little differences with your brothers: possibly you were very much in the wrong. But you are young; and it seems that youth must commit follies in order the more certainly to learn wisdom." She was smiling as she spoke and looking for something. "I received the letter you wrote for Aimée, and it was only through her that I knew you were already here." As she said these words, she drew out a silver watch and gave it to me, saying: "A good workman such as you will want to know the time: keep it!" I did not know what to do! A watch for me! I was overjoyed, by the present itself, but still more because it came from Mme Parangon. What pride for me! What a pleasure for my parents! (But this last was not the thought that gratified me most.) My emotion was manifest in my thanks, which were so extravagant and so inconsequent that they made Colette smile. Tiennette finished undressing her. She was in a simple bodice and skirt. I admired, I devoured her charms, but with an air of ingenuous innocence that quite belied my turbulent senses. While Tiennette was putting something away, Colette handed me her fichu to place with her other clothes. I turned aside to kiss it; but Tiennette saw me. . . . At last I saw for myself that it would be becoming to withdraw.

Order was everywhere restored after the return of Mme Parangon. Parisian Manon returned pregnant to Paris; the cook, with whom her master and some of the workmen had found accommodation in spite of her ugliness, was given notice; and Tiennette remained under the protection of her mistress. I have not mentioned one insult I had had to put up with. By an agreement between M. Parangon, the hideous Reine and Tourangeot (before his visit to Sacy), I was made to shoulder yoke, straps and buckets and fetch the water for the kitchen from the public fountain. The ugly cook, who was a compatriot of the Comtois Degout, had suggested going even further, when I chanced to take Tourangeot to Sacy. As we know, this journey changed his attitude towards me; also his account of it astonished M. Parangon, who there and then abandoned his idea of degrading me to such a point that I should think myself only too lucky when he offered me Manon's hand. Tourangeot upset that plan by his account of my parents and myself, and M. Parangon, who was no fool, thought no more of it. I do not know how Mme Parangon learnt of this, unless it was through Tourangeot, who was something of a sneak. She upbraided her husband, Manon, and Tourangeot sharply, but she said nothing to me, and forbade Tiennette to say anything.

From that evening I took no more meals in the kitchen, but was admitted to the master's table, a favour which Boudard had never enjoyed. Boudard was now a journeyman printer and, with all the other men except the foreman, lodged in town and boarded out. The following day, at the breakfast hour, I crossed the parlour with the workmen's basket. Mme Parangon stopped me. "Where are you going?" "To fetch the breakfasts, Madame." "What, you? Why not Tourangeot . . .?" She called him and made him go instead of me. "I should have thought," she told her husband, "that you would have shown more consideration for the son of my father's friend." "It is the custom, wife, and I followed it." "So he has done this for five months." "Besides," added M. Parangon, "he never complained." "I quite believe that. He comes of a family with too much character to shirk what he thinks to be his duty." When I went up again, the workmen were all astonishment. But such was their respect for Colette, that the words *"Madame sent Tourangeot"* closed every mouth. The foreman told them later that, if Mme Parangon had been at home when I arrived, I should never have run a single errand. Tresignies, a somewhat surly Flemish-Austrian, was the only one to raise a feeble protest. However I conciliated the men by making myself useful in every possible way indoors; and especially by secretly continuing that most disgusting work of an apprentice: sorting the rubbish, and writing their love-letters – the latter even after I had a junior, Bardet, who arrived two days after Mme Parangon's return.

Bardet came from Irancy, Soufflot's native place. He was of a good family, and two of his uncles were very well-to-do; but his father had managed his affairs badly. He was a mere child, as Boudard had been, and at first did nothing but run errands. My day for that was over, and a change had come into my life. Sweet woman, goddess for my adoration, you exalted my soul, I owe as much to you as to my parents, and more than to

Jeannette; your memory has often saved me from crapulous debauch; you are of all the women I have ever known, O Colette, the most venerated and most beloved!

What a procession of weaknesses, Reader, are to pass before your eyes! Seek to unravel their causes, and detect, without my recapitulating them on every page, the influences which have made me what I ought never to have been, at the moment when you might believe me swayed, guided and determined. The human heart is an inextricable labyrinth, through which the autobiographer alone can surely lead you. The book you are reading is proof of this from one end to the other.

After Mme Parangon's return the workmen regarded me in a totally different light. I was respected as the son of her father's friend, and instead of being "thee'd" and "thou'd," *Monsieur* was prefixed to my name. I was amazed. "Ah," I thought, "this adorable woman has the same power over all who know her as she has over my heart!" The first time I took out my watch and put it in the compartment for the ò's, so as to time my lines to the hour, all the workmen came round to look at it. "What a lovely watch! Who gave it you?" Tourangeot, who was distributing paper at the moment, answered for me that Madame had brought it. *"Madame!"* came from every mouth. "I congratulate you, M. Nicolas," said the foreman. "You are aware that I have always done you justice?" "I know that you have always shown me great indulgence, Monsieur Bourgoin." "What an answer!" he exclaimed. "I should be ungrateful if I replied otherwise, Monsieur." Bourgoin, who was somewhat less depraved than the rest, in spite of his assault on Tiennette, embraced me with tears in his eyes, saying: "Madame Parangon understood you better than we did. He dines with the family now," he added to the workmen. "Why didn't he let us know what he was at the beginning?" cried Tresignies, who two days before had given me a kick for not guessing that the basin in front of his press wanted filling. "Has not his scholarship and integrity, and his reticence on certain matters already shown you where he came from?" answered the foreman. I remarked that I had only done my duty as an apprentice, and should continue to do it if M. and Mme Parangon allowed. Then Yeury the Norman, who had married a cousin of M. Parangon, joined in: "I saw that Monsieur Nicolas was a man of good family when he paid his footing, the day of his indentures. Didn't you notice how he only drank a mouthful, and, after toasting us, disappeared? I went out of curiosity to see what he was doing in the attic. He had a Latin book on one side and a dictionary on the other, and was writing." "Ah, that's fine," said the pressman, Billom, who could not read. "I wish I had done the same the day I paid my footing; but for my six francs I wanted booze, a royal booze." Clisot, Fusier, Gonnet, Floriau (the bishop's bastard), Geminique – all the rest, in fact, showed their good will, with the one exception of Degout the Comtois. "So here am I," I thought to myself, "enjoying a consideration due to no personal merit (for that would make no great stir), but to a veneration for the beauty, graciousness, good qualities and virtues all united in one woman, for whom I can find no word, for she is above all description." This thought kept me modest and unassuming, and no less ready to obey the workmen and to forestall their wants. My behaviour was also guided by the fundamental social law of subordination, especially of a young man and pupil to his parents and instructors; because he has less experience and because he will become a parent and a master in his turn. Disobedience is not only a misdemeanour, it is stupid and a lack of sense. There was still another reason for my modesty: the conviction of my own worthlessness; a feeling so deep-rooted and so strong in me as to be injurious, leading me to waste the twelve or fifteen best years of my life, and preventing me from doing or attempting many things which I could have undertaken with advantage. It is true that I was then the prey of grief; that there were reasons for discouragement, for utter prostration even: but what, at this present period, could have induced such self-contempt, such a feeling of my own incapacity? I can only find the cause by examining myself with the most scrupulous attention.

Towards the end of the year I began to educate myself by a perusal of the classics; for I never wasted a moment of my time, but was always working, translating, reading, or performing my duties. If all my life had been so spent, I should merit more veneration than that vile French mendicant they say has just been canonised at Rome. When I had read all the works of Villedieu, I attacked Molière, Corneille, Boileau, La Fontaine, Racine: Racine above all, and he has been most harmful to me, as though everything pertaining to Jansenism was destined to be fatal to me! The romances of Villedieu, I protest upon my conscience, inclined me to virtue, Corneille still more so, Molière at times; while Boileau exalted my mind and developed my taste for literature, without disheartening me; Régnier made me feel it was easy to be a poet (as did Molière – their verses seemed a flowing prose); Chaulieu was more difficult to appreciate, as his urbanity and taste for the pleasures of the table were equally foreign to me; La Fontaine, Grécourt and Vergier might have vitiated my taste, because, knowing nothing of literature, I accepted the publisher's prefaces, and believed them perfect. I had not the experience to recognise what was really good. But finally I came upon Racine, whom chance placed in my hand one evening, and the first play I read was *Phèdre*. I had opened the book at random, and the last play in it caught my eye. I only knew Phædrus the fabulist and, my curiosity awakened, I read these lines:

> *Not one step more, Œnone, no, not one,*
> *I may no further go, my strength is done,*
> *My eyes with long-forgotten light are flecked,*
> *My limbs no more can hold my frame erect.*

I turned to the beginning of the play and still standing, as I was when I took it to the light, I read it at a gasp. . . . I devoured his ten other tragedies, paying little heed to the beauty of the verse; the story gripped me, as it is the story which grips me still when at the theatre; for I can never pull a play to pieces in the acting as the superficial do. Yet the music of the verse bore me smoothly onwards unaware, like to a boat adrift upon a slow, majestically moving river. His sentiments appealed to me: I found in him the love I knew, a tender, humble vehemence. The *Plaideurs* I did not like. When I had read the tragedies, I could think of nothing else. Corneille has not remained with me as Racine has. When I had finished reading him I said: "It is fine, but it is romance." But when I had finished Racine, I felt I had seen real life. I am describing what I felt, taking no account of the views of experts; nor will I now discuss whether or no I was right. It was some time before I took up Racine again, but the desire to re-read what had so deeply moved me grew with the days, until it became as urgent as my earlier longing to finish Terence's *Andria*; and happily it could be gratified. In the interval I had composed some verses, which I now reviewed. They were not harmonious; on the contrary, I found them harsh, but I did not know how to make better ones. Then I read Racine again; and this was what I felt on a second reading when, familiar with the matter, it was the form that impressed me: at the end of every page I was filled with a humble and disheartening admiration: between my verses and his was the difference between man and god. Molière, La Fontaine, and Régnier stimulated me to daring; Racine prostrated me. I did not, as on my first reading, admire him as a model for imitation, but as an ideal to despair of. I envied him, I hated him as an imperious and too perfect master. (Boileau inspired something of the same hatred, but less intense; for with Racine it was not one thing I envied, as I envied Boileau his exactitude and elegance; it was the beauty of his invention, his pathos, his impressive eloquence.) On this second reading I was overwhelmed with disgust for all my work, and my verses above all. I destroyed everything I had done up to then, and so deprived myself of records useful for this story. If love had not come to my rescue, I should never have written another word. But love made verse writing a necessity. I put away the fatal poet, back on his shelf; but only by returning to Molière, La Fontaine, Grécourt and Vergier could I regain some courage. I took up my translation of Terence again, and then began versifying to solace my heart.

The first verses I have kept are dated the 24th June, 1752. But before turning to them, I must trace the progress of my affections from the 22nd of November to that same 24th of June. For the value of this self-dissection lies in the frankness and fidelity of my confessions.

I adored Mme Parangon from the moment I saw her; if I had known her instead of Jeannette Rousseau at the first full blossoming of my heart, I should never have loved anyone but Colette C. . . . But I only caught glimpses of her, and then at too great a distance; I never came near her until after my heart had been brought to flower, not by love only, but by love's fruition; and even more by town-bred vices. Therefore I loved my divine Colette less purely, and desire mingled with my tenderness; I dwelt on her charms rather than on her virtues, because my heart did not want her to remain pure; whereas in Jeannette I had always demanded as much of virtue as of love. This indicates no lesser merit in Colette, dear Reader; but she was married. Other things being equal, I should have loved Colette C. . . . more intensely, more ardently, more purely than unwed Jeannette. My oft-shown reverence for her quality of wife, although that very quality threw me now into jealousy, now into uncontrollable desire, is proof of this. Having made clear the kind of my attachment for this heavenly woman, you, who read me, will understand me better, and nothing in what follows will astonish you.

I began by being jealous of M. Parangon. He was unworthy of a happiness he could not appreciate as I should have done. I saw Colette in each romance I read, or re-read; she was the pattern, and endowed the heroine with charms beyond imagination, so that I understood the love she must have inspired. If my heart had not been tarnished by the things I daily witnessed, her image would have been a talisman to guard me from corruption. But besides that I had already tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree, my imagination kept picturing Colette in the arms of the lusty Parangon, while he enjoyed (or, as I said, *profaned*) her charms; and the seething turmoil of my senses eclipsed the better feelings of a heart by nature tender and chaste, and more sensitive than is usual in such passionate temperaments. These outbursts were sometimes so tempestuous, when I was reading proofs with the master and Colette was in the room, that I was obliged to stop reading and leave the room bent double, unable to hold myself upright. An imaginary colic was my excuse, as I had been subject to such attacks since early childhood, when playing *ineffectively* with girls. The one thing that reassured me was that Mme Parangon did not appear distractedly in love. . . . Thus insensibly my passion for Colette grew to a dangerous excess. But what shadow of hope had I of obtaining any favour from so chaste a patroness? Burnt up with passion, I cast about for some one near at hand who could slake an intolerable desire.

My previous behaviour with Tiennette restrained me as far as she was concerned, but we had some pretty girls for neighbours: on the right, the three *Baron* sisters, Madelon, Berdon, and Manon*; on the left, Prudhot, the grocer's pretty daughter, who has been mentioned already. My vigour, my youth, and my peculiar temperament, seconded by the morals of my fellow townsmen, made it impossible for me to see these young people at close quarters every day without a stirring of desire; and so far from trying to keep my heart pure and faithful for her whom I adored, as I had resolved to do during my novel reading, I yearned, on the contrary, towards pleasure and the favours of more human beauties, to soothe the torment of my secret passion. But my bashfulness prevented me. How was I to express and satisfy my longings with girls whom I only saw at their doors, and could only speak to in front of everyone? I was consumed with desire. . . . Ah, if at first I had not been so virtuous with Tiennette! . . . But my state of mind changed from moment to moment: when I saw my neighbours or Tiennette, I desired them; but as soon as Mme Parangon appeared, I blessed the difficulties which had kept me from them, and every sigh and every breath was then for her. With what delight I executed her least commands! How I flew to fulfil them! how I strove to forestall them! This was no arduous effort, no labour, but a delicious pleasure. There might have been so many reasons for my assiduity that the gracious woman could scarcely guess at the true one.

*The popular forms of Madeleine, Berthe, and Marie. [Ed.]

My taste for reading, my aversion from cards and wine and all the dissipations common to my age, increased Mme Parangon's esteem for me. She regarded me as an exceptional person, bound some day to achieve wonders, since in the very heyday of folly I conducted myself as a man of sense. She could not guess that this was not due to virtue, but to an absorbing interest in women – an interest more rationalised in me than in most men, certainly, seeing that I sacrificed all other pleasures to satisfy it the more completely, so dominated by the one that I had no difficulty in doing without the others. Thus the very thing that endangered Mme Parangon, and might have made her hold aloof, was that which gave her security and made her indulgent, frank and confiding. . . . But I must take things in order in this important part of my narrative.

The source of my taste for reading and for every kind of education was the same now as at Courgis: it seems that I was destined to owe everything to women – pleasures, pains, even death itself. For it was the desire to make myself really worthy of their affection that urged me, though doubtless by an instinct, rather than by a thought-out plan. So I stayed indoors on Sundays and holidays to read, translate, and study; generously allowing my little comrade Bardet and the servant and the cook to go out, and taking their duties upon myself. This won me the affection of the two first; for pretty Tiennette, as much by inclination as by the orders of her mistress, was already to me as an attentive sister. When Mme Parangon came in, she always found me in the shop or in the parlour. I served the village people who came for books, and rendered an account of the sales to my mistress. "It is not worth your staying in," she would sometimes say. "Shut up the shop, and go out and enjoy yourself." I thanked her gratefully, but continued to stay indoors. Not for a kingdom would I have relinquished the pleasure of seeing her when she came in alone during the day.

Some days seem made as they come round to bring us joy. Such a one for me is the 8th of December. On that day, in 1751, I first spoke to Manon Prudhot, my pretty neighbour on the north side. She was just going in as I came out to take the air at our door. She smiled kindly at me and paused, leaning over hers; and this gave me the courage to address her. She returned my greeting, and asked me to give her some of the books which were lent out for reading; I fetched her Villedieu. Such was our first meeting. Mme Parangon arrived as I was leaving Mlle Prudhot, and I followed her into the house. She sat down by the fire, and began to question me about the literary work and reading which I did on Sundays and holidays, and on other days also in my free times, such as the dinner-hour and the evening. I replied that I was translating Terence, and studying Prosody and the Logic of Port-Royal. "What do you read for amusement?" "Mme Villedieu's romances enchant me; but I prefer the *Princesse de Clèves.* I find *Don Quixote* tedious, though some of the episodes are charming! I devoured Robinson's *Dialogues,* but I could not endure his *Visions. . . .*" Mme Parangon smiled at this analysis, and her manner had an unconstrained kindliness which was enchanting. "You never read books that are at all . . . free?" I blushed and replied: "I have read La Fontaine's *Contes.* . . . Once I had put my nose into the book I could not leave off. I was carried away." "That is wrong. We must learn self-mastery. If I were mistress here, there would be no such books in the place. Besides, I have heard M. Parangon himself say that books of that sort blunt the taste, and that those addicted to them find serious and decent books insipid." "Oh, Madame, that is not true of everyone," I cried, with an eagerness which pleased Colette, "because I enjoy good books as much as ever. I even feel a sort of contempt for licentious authors, such as Grécourt and Vergier, whom I have read also." "You would do well to read no more of such authors." "Yes, Madame. I am going to concentrate on translating the Latin poets, and reading the best French ones, such as Racine and Boileau. . . ." "Good. Will you read me some of your translation of Terence?" I ran to fetch my book, and read the first two acts of the *Andria.* She seemed pleased with them, and very much gratified that I was continuing my studies in her house, without neglecting my profession. "You have found a sure way of saving yourself from falling into bad ways, and if you go on as you have begun you will surpass all my hopes. I have known you a long time, and you have always interested me. But certain . . . slips have caused me some anxiety. You are going about the way to remove that."

Never since have I been so happy; never have I had the like of those sweet moments and never will . . . unless through her. . . . But Mme Parangon was too voluptuously beautiful and my senses too inflammable for much familiarity not to become extremely dangerous. She united all the charms of nature to provocative attire and a cleanliness, exquisite and virginal.

After this conversation she made me read M. de Voltaire's *Zaire.* I was unacquainted with this author, as his works were not in the house; but Mme Parangon had seen this play in Paris during her last visit, and was still under the spell of Zaire and *Gaussin.* She followed as I read, leaning upon the back of my chair, and sometimes giving me the tones in which an actor or actress had delivered a speech. One of her arms just touched my shoulder; it burned me, and imparted to my voice the vibrant sonorous quality of emotion. We wept together, my fairy queen and I. . . . When it was finished, I put the play on the table. Two years later my state of mind would have given me courage to speak. But just as my passion had gained strength to unloose my tongue, Manon Bourgoin, Mme Parangon's most intimate friend, came in. "I am still quite overcome," said my beautiful mistress. "Monsieur Nicolas has just been reading me *Zaire*." "He reads well?" "With great feeling." "That's good. He shall read us the six cantos of a little poem in manuscript which my father has just received. There are to be eighteen, but we have only six as yet. It is by the same author. Bourgoin wanted to read it, but he declaims like a pig. Let us see how you read, Monsieur Nicolas." She took up a little quarto volume: it was the *Cid*, and she opened at the monologue of Don Diego:

*"O Fury and Despair! Old age, I hate you!"*

I had read this play which, in my then opinion, was the best of Corneille's, and I knew the monologue by heart, and could deliver it with great expression. Manon Bourgoin was delighted. "He must read us *la Pucelle*! He must read us la Pucelle!"

But here the conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the foreman, Manon's cousin. M. Parangon himself came in at half-past seven, and I hastened to shut myself up in the printing room until a quarter past eight, when supper had well begun; even so I had always finished before anyone else. I hoarded every moment for my beloved translation of Terence which, although the clumsy version of a schoolboy, had just been the means of giving me as much as the greatest author ever got from any of his books. But my work was profitable in two other ways: it prevented me from forgetting what I had already learned, and also clarified my thought and the expression of it by the study of a language which, as the source of our own, contains the derivations of the words we use. Could anything be more ill-considered than J.-J. Rousseau's remarks on the unimportance of Latin and Greek? I have always felt how necessary are these languages, if we are to make ourselves clearly understood when speaking the undigested barbarous jargon we call French, Italian and Spanish; and even for the English idiom (though of Teutonic origin), for a number of Greek and Latin words have been incorporated in it, either indirectly through the French of the time of the Conquest, or directly through the introduction of arts and sciences into that island. . . . But I could not work; the charms of Mme Parangon, her kindness and her conversation filled memory and imagination. The evening I had just spent with her at once increased my passion and gave me confidence; I saw a possibility of leading her to share it (and yet this passion was still far from the extreme obsession it became!). This calamitous idea was destined to be fatal to us both! . . . But I protest that neither was to blame . . . or I alone. . . . But no, even I, the aggressor, was not. . . . I. . . . Man cannot be accounted guilty of that which is beyond his mortal strength, robbing him of reason and self-control. A dangerous principle, I know, but I am obliged to speak the truth; I know within myself that I was not to blame in anything which concerned my passion for Colette. I was not free; I was borne along against my will; I did everything I could to subdue myself and overcome my passion; to avoid my fall, to drive Colette from my heart by putting another in her place – I did all this, because my heart's idol was married, and to desire another's wife seemed to me the crime most contrary to morals. I sought out girls who were free and forced myself to become attached to them. Sometimes I succeeded in deceiving myself as we shall see. But I seemed pursued by a fatality. . . .

It was long before that happy afternoon of the 8th of December was repeated – eight months, in fact – as though Colette had stamped a deep impression only to leave it ample time to fade away. She would not, of course, permit me to read the manuscript of la Pucelle to Manon Bourgoin! . . . During this time my passion, fed by the constant spectacle of Colette's perfections, grew daily stronger. Tiennette was pretty, her ways with me endearing and appealing; sometimes my heart turned in revolt against its bondage towards her. But she was a servant! and my father had inspired a horror of service in the town, especially for girls. To love a servant seemed derogatory to my position. And circumstances fortified my self-control. Tourangeot began his apprenticeship at the press, and a fine handsome lad (Thibaut, Tiennette's lover) managed to get his place. I soon saw that the new shop-boy was in love with Tiennette, but at first she kept her secret from me (imagining I would not remember that she had mentioned his name the day on which she was twice assaulted), and Thibaut abetted her tactfully enough.

About the 1st of January, Thibaut made occasion to speak to me: "I see that you think very highly of Mlle Tiennette, Monsieur Nicolas, and she is an attractive girl; moreover I know how much she values your friendship, and that if you had any intentions towards her, no one else would have a chance. May I ask you, then, if you have any intentions? Because I too honour and respect her, and propose to offer her myself and all that I possess. I am not altogether without means: my parents, whom I left against their wish, own a good carpentry business at Troyes and, as the only son, I shall inherit the shop. So I beg you to tell me the truth; because, if you resigned your claim, I should never go further for a wife than Mlle Tiennette." "I shall not be in a position to settle down for at least ten years," I told him, "and that would be too long for a pretty girl like Mlle Tiennette to wait." Young Thibaut threw his arms about me with tears of joy: "Ah, how much I owe you, Monsieur Nicolas! Mlle Tiennette told me that, as you had kept her from dishonour, she belonged to you and could not dispose of herself without your consent. But after what you have told me, I shall try to win her for myself." I found more pleasure in helping this good fellow – who really was an excellent match – than I could ever have had from basely deceiving a charming girl; my heart had as yet no cause to feel remorse.

To return to my pretty neighbours: Manon Prudhot's unassuming manner, angelic sweetness and attractive face went straight to the heart, and my respectful attentions had predisposed her in my favour. Mme Parangon was in the habit of selecting suitable books for her from those given out on loan, and I was commissioned to act as deputy in supplying her wants. We have seen how I performed this pleasant office on the 8th of December; but being a less strict censor than my mistress, I lent her some novels! Thus a kind of intimacy sprang up between us. Was that Mme Parangon's intention? Did she want to secure Manon, who was an excellent match, for me? Or did she merely want to distract my mind from a passion too obvious for her not to realise its vehemence, and to hold me thus in hand, until she had made all ready to introduce me to some one, no less amiable and in whom she was more closely interested? I cannot say; all I know is that, although Mme Parangon lent books also to the three Baron sisters, our neighbours on the other side, she never commissioned me to change these. Perhaps by bringing me into touch with a pretty young girl, both well-behaved and well-to-do, whom it was scarcely likely I should win in marriage, she hoped to achieve her twofold purpose: and safeguard herself until she had arranged a suitable establishment for me in accordance with the generous plan she had formed. . . . Manon Prudhot was one of the prettiest girls in the town; she was well-behaved, but, in spite of her name, no more prudish than I was obstinate. There were many reasons for trying to make myself agreeable to her: Mme Parangon seemed deliberately to encourage our friendship, and, as a wife, she would gratify my parents quite as much by her beauty as by her wealth; for my father had told me countless times that if ever one of his sons wanted to marry an ugly girl, he would refuse his consent. It was one of the good man's principles that feminine graces are indispensable in a wife, and especially in towns, so that a man may be kept from evil by conjugal fidelity.

At the same time, the eldest of the Baron sisters was charming, though her beauty was of a different kind from Mlle Prudhot's. Madelon Baron was lively, playful, and coquettish. She had often been very gracious to me, and one day had taken my part against the Parisian Manon. This lovely girl ravished my heart through the senses, whereas pretty Manon Prudhot woke the senses through my heart. I inclined to the unassuming Prudhot, as being more in harmony with my character, and was on the point of deciding finally in her favour when, one holiday, as I was talking at the door of M. Minon, Jacquette C.'s husband, with my friend Breugnot, his clerk, Mlle Madelon happened to go by on her way to Vespers at the Cordeliers, and tapped my cheek lightly with her fan as she passed. "Ha, ha!" laughed Breugnot. "I envy you your luck! You have found favour with the prettiest girl in the town." I replied that she had sometimes returned to me books which Mme Parangon lent her, which had given me the opportunity of showing my willingness to be of service. And that was all I allowed myself to say. "They say she is not unkind," he continued.

"For my part," I hazarded, for I knew neither good nor evil of her on that score, "I only know her as well and properly behaved, and very affable; that is all." It should be observed that the young men of the town where I was apprenticed were the greatest braggarts in all France, and that they boasted more loudly of what they had not, than of what they had obtained. Therefore my answer sounded so extraordinary to Breugnot, that he imagined I had already been made happy. Having got this idea, and as he could do no boasting on his own account, for fear of his guardian, Canon Joson, he started bragging about me, and told his acquaintances, Mme Minon among the rest, that I had enjoyed the beautiful Baron's charms. These reports soon came to the ears of Mme Parangon through her sister.

One evening, when I was going out after supper, as was my custom now that I wanted to ingratiate myself with one or other of my pretty neighbours, I found Mme Parangon leaning over the shop door. "You are going out?" "Yes, Madame, that is unless. . . ." "As a matter of fact, I have something to say to you." I approached her in silence, and she beckoned me to follow her into the parlour, where she made me sit down. "I am greatly distressed by what I have to say to you! How could a young man, brought up by such excellent parents, one who has shown so much refinement in his attitude towards Aimée and Tiennette, forget himself in a manner that would be unpardonable in the most contemptible puppy?" "Madame, I venture to assure you in advance that some one has been slandering me." "What did you say to Breugnot on Sunday about Mlle Baron, a girl as good as she is lovable, respected by all, and more worthy of respect even than of the affection her frank gaiety wins for her – what did you say to Breugnot when she passed you on her way to Vespers?" I blushed. "She gave you a tap with her fan, and this innocent action . . . which was an honour to you. . . .

Oh Monsieur Nicolas, I thought better of you!" "I am astonished, Madame, not confused. . . . Will you let me go and fetch M. Breugnot?" "No; repeat the conversation, and I will see if I can believe you." Then I gave her a full account of it, just as I have told it here, without changing a syllable. Mme Parangon looked at me for a moment in silence. "I believe you," she said. "There is no need for Breugnot. You are more trustworthy than he is. Keep to your principles: and avoid the vices of the workmen within and your friends without. You would lose too much! . . . Now you may go." "You are not going out, Madame? Would you allow me to read you something, until people come in?" "You have been working all day; go out and amuse yourself; quick! It is good for you, and I want you to keep well." I obeyed, but with the intention of returning in good time.

As I went out I saw Madelon at her door. I approached her timidly. "You have good reason to be ashamed," she said. "Ah, Monsieur Nicolas, I thought you different from the other young men here!" "I have been hearing the most surprising and disconcerting things," I replied. "I have just this moment been reproached on your account, and I assure you I did not deserve it. And now you yourself are accusing me! What have I done?" "You have abused my kindness to you, Monsieur Nicolas; a kindness you owed to the good character which it seems you have not got." "May I know of what I am accused? Mme Parangon did not tell me." "You boasted . . . about me!" "I, Mademoiselle? . . . Ah, the feelings you inspire have never yet been trusted to my lips! . . . perhaps I never even confessed them to myself, until this moment!" Madelon was affected by my words. She liked me, and Mme Parangon's consideration made everyone think well of me. "What, you never told Breugnot . . .?" "If he put into my mouth a single word belying my respect for you, and all your sex," I answered, seeing that she stopped, "he lies, and I will make him confess it." "Can he be innocent?" she said aside, raising her eyes to heaven. "Repeat your conversation with him, without changing or omitting one syllable." I repeated it frankly and ingenuously, as I had to Mme Parangon, and convinced her, as I had convinced Colette. "I do not wish to hear Breugnot's version; I despise him and I trust you. Let the whole business end with our conversation to-night." "What, am I never to have the pleasure of speaking to you again?" "You have not been to blame; who said I should never speak to you again? Should innocence be penalised because it is slandered? Rather it should be recompensed. . . ." I was just going to kiss the beautiful hand which she had allowed to remain in mine, when her step-mother and two sisters came up to us. "What?" exclaimed Berdon, "are you speaking to him?" "He had nothing to do with it, sister." "So he says!" "The word of some people is sufficient evidence, and Monsieur Nicolas is one of them." "You are very kindhearted!" "No, I am only just; I judge by the manner, by the eyes, by the changing colour of the face, by every slightest movement and contraction; and I am as sure of his innocence as I am of my own." I listened with my eyes fixed on Madelon. Little Manette said in her knowing way: "I agree with Madelon; he has said nothing but what is right and proper." "What makes you think that?" "Because he is not ashamed, although he is so sensitive." "I agree with Fanfan," said Mme Baron. "I had noticed that too." "Then we must believe you innocent," said Berdon, "but be careful. You have had a good lesson!" . . . Overjoyed by my vindication with all three sisters, I joined their hands together (for I dared not kiss Madelon's alone) and pressed my lips to them. "Oh," said little Manette, "I would go surety that he told the truth, just for this." Indeed, I was deeply moved by two things; firstly by their kindness and goodwill towards me, and, secondly, by a kind of pity that these sweet girls, so worthy of protection, should be slandered by the very persons who should have championed them. Mme Baron told the sisters to go indoors, and I went to see if there was anyone at home.

I put my head into the shop and, as the baize door was open, looked through into the parlour. There I saw Tiennette, who seemed drowsy. I did not want to wake her, but she was not asleep. Thibaut was in a corner of the room discussing his plans, while the girl listened with her eyes shut and her head resting on her hand. I only overheard these few words: "How do you feel about me, Mlle Tiennette?" "You're a good fellow, Monsieur Thibaut, and I respect you," she replied, without opening her eyes, "but I shall do nothing without consulting Mme Parangon. I have told her who you are and why you came here. . . ." Not wanting to hear any more, I withdrew.

As Mlle Prudhot's door was ajar, I went up to it. Manon was sitting without a light in the shadow cast by the top half of the door, and only a movement told me she was there. She answered my greeting with a gracious smile and came out of the shadow, but without speaking. This made me ask in a whisper: "May I stay and talk for a moment?" "Yes, but speak low! . . . My mother has forbidden me to talk to you any more." "Faith! But why?" "I am not supposed to know, but it is because you talked about Madelon Baron." "Mademoiselle, I swear I did not say what was attributed to me; and happily I have been able to convince Mme Parangon of this." "Oh, how glad I am! Please come and tell Mamma!" . . . As she finished speaking, I was aware of some one trying to pass me, and turning round, saw Mme Parangon. I guessed from her gracious manner that she had just been to see her sister and that Breugnot's interrogation had confirmed my story, so that I was completely cleared. "Is your mother in, Mlle Manon?" she said to pretty Prudhot. "Yes, Madame, with my papa and sister." "I have just come to say good-evening to them. . . . Wait for me," she added to me, "I shall not be long." She went indoors and Manette and I, standing silently outside, could hear her vindicating me in most flattering terms. She praised my family, my conduct and my natural gentleness (*artificial* would have been a truer word). Manette appeared delighted.

"I have forbidden my youngest daughter to acknowledge his greeting," said Mme Prudhot. "I will remove the ban." "Yes," said her husband, a very sensible man, "for one should only do a thing like that with girls when it is absolutely necessary; and besides no slur should be put on a good man." In an access of pleasure I kissed Manon's hand, and she withdrew it without displeasure. . . . The charm of that moment quickens my heart even at sixty; my happiness was as intense as I have ever known. The thought of Manon, whom I had found so charming on the day when I first dined with Marguerite at Mme Jeudy's, increased my ecstasy, and focussed all that I had ever felt of amorous desire. Continued longing and continued admiration without hope, that is the way to adore women and make of love an exquisite passion!* We listened without speaking, my hand slipped out again in search of Manette's; I found and clasped it, and she let me keep it until Mme Parangon came out. I went back with her.

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*A sounder moral than some. In contrast to the splenetic nonsense of Epictetus and the Stoics, I have always tried to show how to find happiness through enjoyment. To me Epictetus' method of finding happiness in negation is only suitable to slaves, without means or liberty to enjoy. But that is not the position of most people, not even of beggars, or the negroes in America. They can have pleasures and they ought to have them. The method of Epictetus is that of arrogant pessimism and indifference to one's fellow-creatures – in a word, of those few men who are more unhappy in character than in circumstances.

The conversation I had with my good fairy before going up to my attic watch-tower (for I forgot to say that, since Mme Parangon's return, I no longer slept above the kitchen; but in a closet boarded off from the loft, which, though hot in summer and cold in winter, was healthy; and above all I had it to myself) – this conversation, as I was saying, was one of the determining epochs of my life. Mme Parangon was friendly, familiar even, without further explanations; and my heart opened its doors to that intense passion for her which I had so far managed to keep in check, either with the help of Madelon's vivacious gaiety, or favoured by the sweet hope of winning my modest and appealing Manon to wife. But after this conversation I was bound as by a chain of iron: bound by gratitude, affection and reverence; by the very virtue of the woman I adored, as well as by the charms of her beauty, the lure of her attractions and the sweet graciousness of her character. "She is unparalleled," I thought and felt. She made a profound impression which penetrated my every part, so that only by destroying me, could it have been destroyed. A thousand times after did I attempt that impossible feat, in abandonment and dissipation; but, like a young bull picketed in a meadow, I could only turn around my centre, and, the fool of my own striving, wrap my tether about the stake, shortening with every turn the span of my delusive liberty. One person alone could have given me the victory – Jeannette; or perhaps Edmée, if I had not lost sight of her. But Jeannette lived in my brother's parish, which was worse than being shut away in the Garden of the Hesperides and guarded by a dragon! All approach to her was for ever forbidden. . . . Edmée Servigné was no longer within my reach, as Mme Châtelain, the only person who could have brought us together again, had gone away. . . . I could only strain at my bonds, without power to break them! . . . I prepare the way for leniency towards me, in this the season of my springtide, the season of flowers, fair as the rose, when everything was opening and unfolding to new sensations and new charms; when inexperience, enthusiasm and happiness vied with each other to make me stray. Reader, may you be touched by memories of yourself when young in reading me, and say of each new incident or quality, "That is myself! That is what I was like!" But I must get on with my story, and not lose myself in reflections.

"Your character is completely vindicated," Mme Parangon said to me, "and I congratulate you. . . . Choose your friends carefully, for I suppose you need friends at your age? . . . But it is difficult to select them here. The best way is to be acquainted with many people and intimate with none, until you have found a real friend. And above all, no confidences; do not even take up the defence of women who may be slandered in your presence; show what you feel by silence, and by withdrawing if the offence continues. I have been told that one day, when some one spoke ill in your presence of two women who were strangers to you, you pretended to yawn; and when asked if you found the conversation dull, you replied that to listen to scandal about people one did not know was, at the very least, extremely tedious. I was greatly pleased by this, and why should I conceal my pleasure in anything so creditable? It was equal to my pain when I heard. . . . Tomorrow I shall speak to Madelon. . . ." "Oh, please do, Madame," "You say that . . . very eagerly." "Forgive me, Madame. But imagine the shame I have endured, to know that so sweet a girl should think I had presumed . . . I who. . . ." "Well?" "I meant that I should die of shame if I were in the slightest guilty of bragging even about a . . . real kindness." Mme Parangon smiled. "But you must not solicit such kindnesses. A girl will often grant favours through ignorance, and for want of . . . a little thought;

and a young man who wishes to be genuinely respected by everyone, never takes an advantage, never strays, or tries to lead astray the girl who honours him with her attention: he proves his strength by showing her he hopes to marry – or who merely receives him as a friend – a reverence which will make him in turn revered. Do not believe, as you may read in certain books or hear from people, that women look on a man who is respectful to them as a fool. Only a fool is regarded as a fool; and a young man of any parts can find a thousand ways of showing the warmth of his feelings. His eyes, his manner, his conversation – all help to reveal the reason for his attentions, and will make him far more agreeable than any coxcomb. You will find that out one day; and remember too that if a woman often influences a man's opinions, men equally often form a woman's. Whether you are with many people or with one, never be ashamed to take the side of virtue; but rather make virtue lovable, by gracious ways and charitable judgments; let no one have more polished manners or turn a compliment more neatly, and you will enjoy the pure and exquisite pleasure of raising the person or persons with whom you are to the highest level of good manners. Avoid slander, as you have so far done; never indulge in sarcasm, or bitter irony, or the malicious jesting of our would-be wits. Be straight-forward as is your nature; polite without cringing; ready to praise what is praiseworthy in those you meet, thereby fostering what virtue they have – a fine work! And your reward will be that, wherever you appear, honest men will rejoice, and bad men tremble; you will be beloved, because each person will be sure that in your company he will have at least a moment's pleasure. Never forget anyone, but be courteous to all; that is not unimportant: it is the essence of good breeding. . . ."

She had reached this point, and I was sitting in front of her listening, my mouth half-open and my eyes fixed on her eyes, which she had lowered a hundred times while speaking, when everyone came in. I went to one side, and M. Parangon said, laughing slyly: "I wager my wife has been mounting guard over her favourite because of a trifling misdeed?" "Monsieur," she replied, "if he were guilty he would not be permitted to approach me." "Oh, so the young innocent *is* innocent!" exclaimed M. Parangon, turning to the others: M. Bourgoin, the foreman's uncle, Manon Bourgoin and her mother, a certain Mme Corhaux, who had called in passing to see Mme Parangon, and Bourgoin the foreman. "I suspected as much, my dear wife. When your pretty sister came here to tell you about it in secret, I thought a dozen times: 'There's nothing in it. Monsieur Nicolas is too . . . good.'" Then assuming an imbecile expression, he said: "Go and put your innocence to bed, dear boy. You will never make a scoundrel, I warrant you." I departed.

How unwise for the husband of a pretty wife to speak so to a young man! His words were perhaps the chief cause of . . . an audacity which will make me seem a scoundrel indeed! On so fine a thread does our virtue hang!

The following conversation took place after my departure, as repeated to me by Bourgoin:

*M. Parangon:* I wager that booby protested his innocence with all his lungs. *Mme Parangon:* He did. *M. Parangon:* I wager he cried? *Mme Parangon:* He seemed much grieved by so grave an accusation. *M. Parangon:* But I wager he cried. *Mme Parangon:* No, Monsieur. *M. Parangon:* Well, then, he's crying now. . . . Go and see, Bourgoin. *Mme Parangon:* No, no, Monsieur Bourgoin! *M. Parangon:* I would have given a lot to hear his protestations, and a hundred times more to hear your lecture, my dear prude. I wager he put on a face a yard long at your first word, and went red and white and blue? And he cried, I'm certain he cried. I would give . . . a hundred to one on it. *Mme Parangon:* Faith, Monsieur! Say no more about it." She turned to converse with the others in the room, especially with Manon Bourgoin, who told her something about a certain Brother d'Arras, which Tourangeot overheard. It was late and everyone left soon. Tourangeot came to look for me.

I had gone to my room in a state of great emotion, and was dreaming of everything that had happened during the evening when Tourangeot came in quietly to see if I were awake. I asked who was there, and then the Tartar came and sat by my bed. With reference to what he had overheard, he began talking about Manon Bourgoin: her adventures with a Franciscan called Brother *Damonville*, who wanted to marry her; with the clerk *Dupin,* who assaulted her, with M. Parangon, etc. He gossiped about our neighbours, slandering them all except Manon Prudhot; he had nothing to say against her. He told me the story of a mistress of his, who had been a servant in the house while M. Parangon was a widower; I will call her *Reine I.* The story and her crimes were unspeakable. She had two children, and both have turned out badly. (He did not tell me that his own Marie had had a daughter; and I only found out later that Manon Vernier had had a son, and Reine II a daughter.) I pretended to be sleepy to drive the chatterbox away. But I did not go to sleep; I lay dreaming awake. I saw again my adored Colette speaking to me, I heard her voice. Then the swift current of my thought brought me to Madelon. I was with her, and talking to her. I had perceived so much kindness in her conversation that my heart opened to her, and I felt a strong inclination to attach myself to this charming girl. . . . But my roving imagination drove me on, and presented a vivid picture of my sweet, shy Prudhot, decked in all her charms; I remembered her gracious welcome despite her mother's orders, and her joy in Mme Parangon's vindication. "That is the wife for me," I cried. "Mme Parangon has chosen her for me, and I will have her. Is she not modest and beautiful as Jeannette? Is she not of the same type, and with Jeannette's own candour? And she is not guarded by a dragon; my people will be perfectly satisfied: she is pretty, of the town, and well-to-do. Yes, I must set my affections on her!" So great was my agitation that it was like a fever. By morning I was exhausted. Always an early riser and the first at work, I fell asleep at five o'clock, and the most delightful dream poured healing balm upon my soul. How pleasant are happy dreams! Surely it is they that have given man throughout the ages his idea of heavenly bliss; and his belief that the soul, freed of the body's bondage, enjoys more perfect happiness, as the happiness of dreams is purer and more intoxicating than reality.

*Ne tu sperne piis venientia somnia portis!*
*Quum pia venerunt somnia, pondus habent.*
Prop. l. iv, el. 7.

It seemed to me that I was upon the flowery banks of the Yonne in a pleasant meadow above the coffer-dam. I was walking under the tufted alders, whose sombre green contrasted with the tenderer colours of the willows and poplars. A tributary rivulet divided the grove, but the interlacing roots of trees made a bridge to cross by. I had scarcely savoured the cool air, when I heard a lovely voice singing a melody such as Grétry has since written, a composer less vigorous than Gluck his rival, but closer perhaps to Nature unalloyed. Enchanted, I arose and ran towards the sound, and came upon five or six fair maidens who seemed startled by my appearance. Colette was the singer; Jeannette Rousseau listened in delight;

Madelon fled among the willows, while Manon Prudhot crouched in the grass and Edmée watched me from afar across a thicket of wild cotton bushes. I went up to Colette. "Sit down," she said. "We all love you, but only one of the five can be your wife." She looked at me, and I held out my hand to her. "Ah, if it were you!" "If you wish, it shall be me." "But you are married!" "No, my marriage is annulled. I have had no children and am still a maid. I have feigned pregnancy to please him, and to stop his tormenting me, because . . . because. . . ." (I read her thought, and all she would have liked to say.) . . . At this moment Madelon Baron, Edmée Servigné and pretty Prudhot joined us, all three transformed into young men. I was enraptured. "We are going to be apprentices," they said. "We are boys who passed ourselves off for girls. Goodbye!" They went away in their schoolboy dress, taking Jeannette, who had not changed, with them. I could not see her face. "Her face is veiled against you," Edmée told me. "You will never see her again." I found myself alone with Mme Parangon. I sat down by her side, and held her hand; she reclined within my arms, her cheek touched mine. . . . A delicious sensation (the perfect happiness) laid its spell upon my heart. God! How happy I was! How such a dream augments the passion one already has! Nature cannot save us waking from the ills of life, which temper and alloy our every pleasure – if they do not utterly destroy it. But this kind Mother has ordained that we should know in dreams the unshadowed happiness of the Gods. . . . I woke in a sweet ecstasy, and my dream's enchantment lasted beyond my wakening. I still felt her burning cheek against my cheek; my outstretched arms sought to retain her: I clasped, I strained to me the precious, fugitive image, which harsh reality was snatching from me, by snatching me from sleep.

During that day I seemed older by ten years. Engrossed in my dream, I was silent, serious without sadness, thoughtful, of deliberate speech, affectionate and kind. [Have you ever noticed a youth or maiden wearing the thoughtful expression of old age? They are in love; perhaps they have just consummated their manhood or their womanhood. Be careful, parents, and watch your children closely when they assume the aspect of maturity!] The charm that held me was strengthened by something which, though a trifle, was important. Once a week we had stewed veal for dinner. I never ate such dishes, and, after the soup and boiled beef, I was rising to leave the table, when I saw that a mutton cutlet had been put before me. I was astonished and abashed, but made no comment. After dinner I went into the kitchen and told Tiennette, blushing: "You must never cook anything specially for me; I was really quite ashamed. An apprentice must not have fads. Dear friend" (for so I often called her, since her marriage with Thibaut had been arranged by consent of their parents), "I cannot tell you how much this proof of your kindness and goodwill has vexed me!" Tiennette smiled at my remonstrance. "Then go and tell Madame! It was by her orders, after she had consulted Monsieur and got his approval. He said himself that you worked as hard as the foreman, and it was only fair you should be well fed." I apologised to Tiennette for my brusqueness, for I had spoken sharply, and went up to the printing-room to meditate. Such thoughtfulness in Mme Parangon, on the very day of my dream, and the day after an explanation which had triply advantaged me, brought such pure contentment to my soul that it came near to ravishment. My enthusiasm for work increased; for, as a result of the good principles I had learned at my mother's breast, love, and even pleasure, inclined me to virtue, by opening my heart, and filling it with affection towards God and my parents, and all that I held dear.* I have never been in danger of losing my morals save in misery and misfortune; and I always remember that axiom of Cicero, *Omnia jubet paupertas, et facere, et pati,* holding it a kind of excuse for some of those who are unfortunate. It is the duty of the Government to make their citizens happy, if they do not wish to be as guilty of crime as are its perpetrators, and if they would avoid a revolution.

That evening Mme Parangon went out immediately after supper with Bourgoin and his cousin, that Manon Bourgoin who appeared so little suited to be Colette's friend. Left with Tiennette and Thibaut, who looked as though they would gladly be alone, I decided to go out and leave them to themselves. On the doorstep I overheard Berdon and Manon Baron talking to young Deschamps, their cousin. They were speaking of Manon Prudhot. "She's pretty," said Deschamps. "And amorous," replied Manon. "She takes after her family," said Berdon. "I know that better than anyone," said Deschamps. "Her family is comfortably off, but it had a curious origin." "Let's see how much you know," cried Manon. "My father told us," continued Deschamps, "that it is descended from the bastard of a beautiful and gallant abbess of the *Bernardines* by a distinguished churchman, the same whose translation of Plutarch is still considered the best." "You mean Amyot?" asked Berdon. "Yes, Amyot. That is why it is called Prudhot, unless it was the name that suggested the story. They say that Manon Prudhot is exactly like her ancestress of four or

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*I have never drunk to excess; but two or three times I have tried the philosophical experiment of intoxication, and it made me cheerful, gentle and good-natured. I judge myself by that; the man who is bad when drunk is bad by nature, but dares not show it. *In vino veritas* is a truer saying in every way than people imagine. Remember that I cannot bear the sight of human blood, though indifferent to that of animals. This all goes to prove that I am naturally good; why then have I done wrongly so often? It is because I have almost always been poor and unhappy; misfortune sours and hardens the character in oneself as in others.

five generations back. If popular rumour is true, the abbess, in bands and veil, must have been the most charming person in the world. The rounded contours of young Manette's face are appealing as well as attractive, and her expression has a sweet artlessness; moreover her mouth is small with pouting scarlet lips, her nose is shapely, her eyes bewitching, and that white skin, only lightly touched with rose, gives her a something virginal. Then she is tall and slender, as is proper in youth; her movements lack complete assurance, and this soft uncertainty adds something voluptuous to her gait." "You bore me!" interrupted Manon Baron. And they went indoors as I came out.

I did not see Madelon, but pretty Prudhot came out from the parlour; so that it was with her whom Deschamps had just so well portrayed that I had an intimate conversation, in this month of May, and in the state of mind I have described.

When I caught sight of her, Manette was leaning over the door, and her smile invited me to halt in front of her. "I was much distressed last night," I said. "Shall I be happier to-night?" "I should think so! and I must congratulate you. Do you value the opinion of my mother and sister?" "As much as yours; that is to say, infinitely." "Well then, they both think a great deal of you. But they heartily despise M. Breugnot, your friend." "They must not blame him, Mademoiselle. He must have misunderstood me, because I am sure he could not have meant to slander either me, his friend, or Mlle Madelon, whom he was praising so highly. You are aware that I have never spoken to the Mlles Baron except as I am speaking to you, at the door, and have never once even gone into the shop. Not a word of slander will ever come near neighbours, so charming and so worthy of respect as are you and they, through my fault; for, that the passers might see the barrier between us, I would not go indoors when I might have done so; save when the parents invited me to join the family circle in a decorous intimacy." "You think just as Mme Parangon said you did, and that is why I am allowed to talk to you. For Mme Parangon told Mamma to-day how you behaved with Aimée and Tiennette, and she was so delighted that she got up exclaiming: 'Good boy! God bless him!' and then said to me: 'Dear child, show the young man every civility; for it is just as important to encourage good conduct as to discourage bad.'" "I am deeply honoured by your mother's approval, Mademoiselle. I do not know if other young men think as I do (I must suppose so), but the lovelier you appear to me – and you are really enchanting! – the more particular I am to address you with the respect due to God's masterpiece – a beautiful woman. I shall treat you as I would a sister, were I lucky enough to have one so lovely, and be as careful in what I say to you as I would be of her reputation and virtue!" "How I respect you for those words, M. Nicolas! . . . No, you are not like the other men here, and it is their loss. . . . I am coming out, and we will sit on the bench together." And she came out.

"I am sure all honest folk think as you do, M. Nicolas; but either they hide it or else there are very few of them, at any rate among the young people of to-day that I have heard talking." "A good man is shy, Mademoiselle; he avoids coquettes and dares not accost a respectable girl, unless she happens to be a neighbour, or circumstances throw them together; whereas vain and boastful and conceited men are impudent and will address you boldly: they are the people who make themselves heard, and therefore you come to the unfortunate conclusion that everyone is like them." "I think you are right. Before I met you I thought a woman's part was always to oppose, always to reprove men; and theirs always to make unbecoming remarks and flaunt their vices, and that decent conversation, as between woman and woman, was impossible with them, because they never could say anything that would not soil our ears." "I fear that is only too true, Mademoiselle! But there are exceptions. They say it is bad to read novels. Certainly, if they commend vice; but I have not come across any like that, and, from those I know, I contend that to read novels is perhaps the only way to develop the hearts and minds of our young people, and to make them endurable." "I agree with you; all those which Mme Parangon has lent me have made me love what is good and decent. But before you chose my books, Boudard, and before that Renaud – with whom you have much in common – would sometimes set traps for me, by changing the ones Mme Parangon gave them for others which I could scarcely ever read. I was obliged to beg my sister, who has weak sight and should not read, to tire out her eyes by looking through them for me; and she rejected at least three out of every four. But since you came, I feel quite safe, and to show my mother and sister that no tricks are being played on me, I read my book again aloud to them. They praise you, and I am pleased . . . I assure you I have never trusted any man save you, with the exception of my father." "O Mademoiselle, I am indeed proud of such an honourable preference!" "Will you set up as a printer yourself some day – here, for instance?" "No, Mademoiselle; there is only room for one in this town, and M. Parangon has exclusive rights." "How annoying. But could you not choose another profession?" "Not easily! my parents have a large family." "But as far as your personal inclinations are concerned?" "If there was good reason . . . for surely inclination must be guided by reason?" "The grocery business, for instance?" "I would enter it with pleasure if. . . ." "That is all I want to know. You would make no difficulties?" "If I dared hope, Mademoiselle . . . but no." "What do you mean – *no*? Do you like your present trade?" "If I must tell you the truth, Mademoiselle, I think I am made for something kin to the sciences, if not for the pursuit of science itself." "But, if . . . for. . . . Would you like to be a grocer in our business?" "Ah, Mademoiselle, the happiness of being near you would make grocery the finest trade in the world, and. . . ." "We will talk more about it later," she interrupted. "But it is quite certain that you would not hate grocery with us?" "I should love it, Mademoiselle," and I kissed the hand I was clasping in mine. "It is a business well thought of here." "Above all as practised by you." (And indeed it should be a good business in a town which is the only commercial centre for a considerable district, and has all the facilities of water transport.) "But it is you who will decide me. . . ." The conversation was beginning to worry me, and I felt I was saying less what I thought, than what would please Manette; so I changed the subject: "I have been reading something interesting the last few days; the story of *Carmante and Evander.*" "You make me want to read it too; where does it occur?" "It is all in the fourth volume of Villedieu's works." "I shall enjoy it, knowing that you enjoyed it." "I have marked the passages where the romantic charm most appealed to me." "I shall find them."

At this moment her mother and elder sister, who had stayed in the parlour while we were talking, came to the door. I got up to give them my place. "No, no, do not disturb yourself!" They noticed I was holding Manon's hand, and added: "That is good! Stay just as you are." We were sitting with our backs to the wall and they made *Jeannin*, their apprentice, place some chairs facing us. Madelon and her sisters, returning from their walk, joined our little group, together with some young men of the quarter:

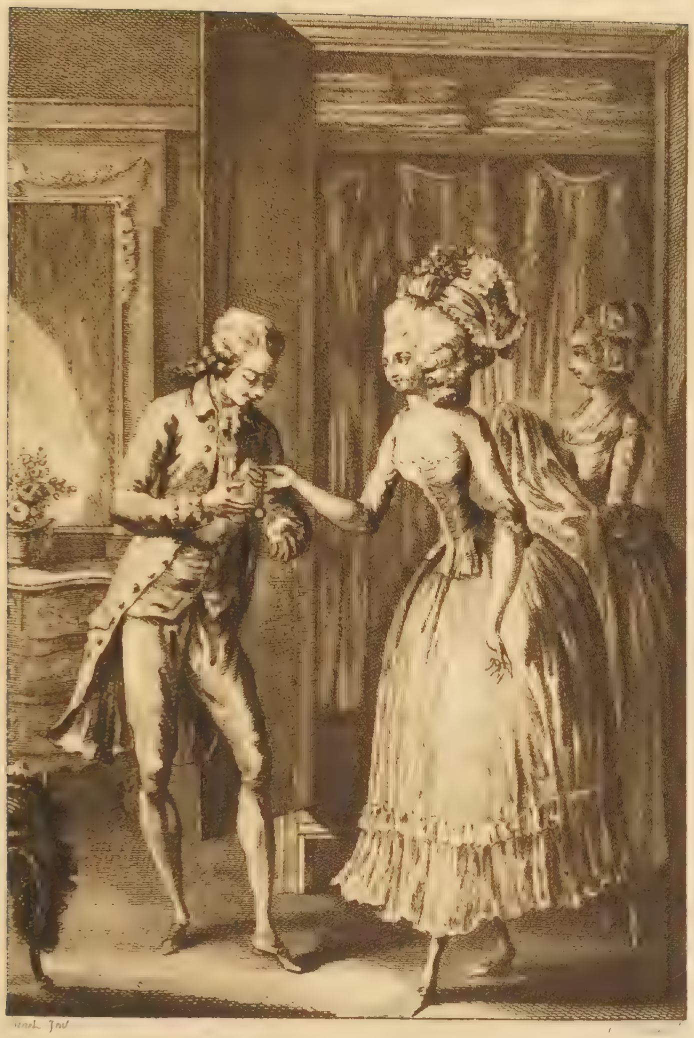
*Arnaud Devosgines, Blonde,* a grocer's son, the two *Deschamps, Roullot, Chardon,* son of a haberdasher, and Breugnot himself. A game of *Pomme-un* or *Pied de bœuf,* a kind of forfeits, was proposed, to pass the evening. Pretty Manette's hand never left mine. . . . It is the really foolish pleasures that we seem able to enjoy most, and I was in an ecstasy of happiness. However, when I caught sight of Mme Parangon on her way home, I rose to join her, hoping for a moment's conversation; but she did not think it the right moment. "Stay where you are," she said, without opening the half door which she had already shut, "until M. Parangon comes in." And I went back to the game. The forfeits were being paid, and they made me pay first, for fear I should escape again. Blonde delivered sentence. He ordered me kiss all the older women; and, in the meanwhile, himself indulged in the coarsest fooling behind the shelter of his hat. M. Parangon arrived just as the fourteen-year old Annette Bourdeaux was boxing his ears. I rose to go indoors and Manette did the same. Blonde's chastisement broke up the game and everyone went home.

In the silence of the night I turned over the unmistakable proposals of Mlle Prudhot. At first I was favourably disposed to them because, from a worldly point of view, they were advantageous. But when I reflected that I should have to give up printing, which I loved; leave Colette's house, relinquish my position as her apprentice and a member of her family, her dependant in fact, I was frightened; and this distressing thought destroyed all the charm which the prospective possession of Mlle Prudhot had had until then. I felt myself cooling towards her; grocery repelled me; and though the position of a printer at that time was more uncertain, I considered it more dignified. These reflections engrossed me deeply; but as I had slept little the preceding night, a deep slumber submerged thought; and I slept as do the beasts, only to wake at broad day next morning.

It was a holiday. In the morning, as was my custom, I worked at my translation, and read in the afternoon. As the time for Vespers at the Cordeliers drew near, I went to the door to see Madelon pass. The road was absolutely deserted, as everyone from the Gothic side of the clock-tower was at Saint Renoquert, and from the Roman at Saint Eusèbe. Mlle Baron appeared at her door. I bowed to her, and she replied by beckoning me to her. "You were very much *prudhoted* yesterday evening?" "These ladies were kind enough to put up with me." "They are all intolerable except Manon: the mother is a ridiculous bigot; the elder sister is a poor thing who cannot see, and has no ideas beyond just existing; and the father is a blockhead. Why not come here this evening? We play and frolic under the eyes of my step-mother; you will meet the most entertaining young men, and all the girls most sought after in the quarter – or in the town for that matter – for their taste and wit. You will enjoy yourself . . . and it will give you . . . polish. I use that word with hesitation," she added, with a peculiar expression, "because you are quite passable as you are, even though you want a little finish. But it seems to me that you are not fond enough of amusement. You are too serious. . . . Take care! Something is keeping you tied to the house!" "And what is that?" I asked, trying to smile. "What is it? Look in your own heart." "I have looked and I find . . . may I tell you?" "I wish you to." "Mademoiselle Madelon Baron! That is the loadstone that keeps me close." "You are not telling me quite exactly what you have found. . . . Would to God, for your sake, it were what you have just said!" "But it is you, Mademoiselle!" (I feared lest my tongue had slipped in speaking, as sometimes happens when a thought is too strongly repressed.)

"Lud, I know perfectly well what you said! . . . Mme Parangon." . . . (she paused). "Is she at home?" At the mention of Mme Parangon I blushed and fell into confusion; and Madelon, who had said her name and then paused on purpose, only finished her question when she had produced the effect she expected. I replied that Mme Parangon had gone out. "Then we will talk till Vespers are over. I am looking after the shop; my stepmother is upstairs with *Marote*, but she is dressing and we shall have an hour. Now I wager you find yourself in an embarrassing position?" "Why, Mademoiselle?" "Not another of our youngsters would find it so. They would begin with one and end with the other, and perhaps lose all three; but they would not be embarrassed!" "I do not understand you." "You are going to. You love, you adore a beautiful lady. This is your one true passion. I have known about it for six months past without anyone telling me" (we were in May 1752); "your own conduct is the only traitor. At the same time you think me pretty; and you like me. There, is not that true?" "To deny that I find you enchanting, adorable, would be to lie, Mademoiselle." "That is so . . . and Manon Prudhot? . . . From my knowledge of you, I am sure that her sweet gentle face, the candour of her white skin, her innocent yet by no means foolish laughter; her great melting eyes, blue though her hair is dark; her reedlike slenderness – in a word all her pretty person appeals to you intensely; I know it because it must be so?" "But Mademoiselle. . . ." "Who asked for a confession? I don't want it. . . . This then is your position. It has its pleasant interludes; for when you are alone with any of the three you are happy (except at this moment); but most often it is painful. As you are good at heart, you cannot consider ameliorating it in any of those ways which would make an unprincipled man quite comfortable. You must choose and cannot. Give up your idol?

Ah, impossible! . . . And she so perfect, where to find her equal? There would be no difficulty were she unwed; you would cling to her as a shadow to the body. But you suffer grievously! She is another's wife; she belongs to him; she is his property – utterly his." (I shuddered visibly.) "You dwell on this fatal thought; you taste its bitterness, it fills your mind continually." (How dreadfully I suffered, while she thus scorched me with the fire of truth. I, so prudent, so reticent in love, could not endure the prolonged presentation of this calamitous idea.) "Stop, stop, I beg you!" I cried, breathing with difficulty. "No, on the contrary, you must be pierced through and through with a despair that is the only cure for you." "Oh," I exclaimed, but a swift thought restrained the words already on my tongue, and to hide my perturbation, or conceal its source, I pressed Madelon's hand to my lips. "You are reasonable," she continued, "and will try, I am sure, to cure yourself with the help of either Manon Prudhot or myself: which you have not yet decided. I am well informed and shall go on telling you your own story. To have Manon, you would have to give up your trade and become a grocer, and busy yourself with matters quite foreign to your ruling tastes. You would have to turn your life upside down, and the only compensation would be . . . Manon. I believe she would be compensation enough for a time, for she is really perfect. . . . Indeed, for her sake, I could have asked two things of life: to be a man so as to make her my wife, or for her to be a man, so as to make her my lover; so you see I do her justice. But married love does not last for ever; even a lover's does not, though it is of a sturdier growth. Then what will be left? Regrets. Consider this!" "Your alternative remains, Mademoiselle." "I will not discuss that. . . . All I can say is that, if you loved me and I you, I should take you as you are, and not seek to make you change your calling . . . for . . . I should prefer to be the wife of a journeyman printer who was happy in his trade, than of a discontented draper – which was my father's business, and ours since his death, under the management of a step-mother. . . . Ah," she exclaimed tenderly, "I should rather say of a good mother. Our father gave us an angel when he married her, not a step-mother. We call her our 'nurse', as was her wish, but our hearts give that name its most natural meaning. . . . You see, I turn from you to her at the mere mention of her name. That always happens. . . . But where was I? Ah, I was saying that I would rather be the wife of a working printer, who was happy in his trade, than of a draper dissatisfied with his change of occupation. Do not imagine that you would ever overcome your distaste for any calling so remote from books and learning. You would never take to it; and you would be doubly unhappy because you would destroy your very self in it. A certain amount of freedom is a necessity to you. I know a girl with whom you would be free, either to follow your calling and build up your own business, as her money would give you a start, or to change it – not for commerce, but for some position which would not be exacting, and would leave you time for study. This girl is not in love with you; she has far nobler ground for her attachment: since meeting you she has recognised in you something unique in the town, nay, in the whole district; and has taken an oath which you may be told some day. The one passion which quickens her, the one vow she has made, is to join her life to that of a man whose turn of mind, whose activities, whose concentration even, open a different prospect from the common rut – to a man worthy the name of man, whose virtue and conduct she can respect as much as his intelligence. . . . There, that is the end of what I was longing to tell you, Monsieur. You never expected such serious conversation from me? I would give anyone who was



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watching us a hundred . . . no, a thousand guesses as to what we were talking about. . . . They are coming out of Vespers; there are the maidservants already. Leave me now."

Tiennette returned from Vespers at the parish church; and, instead of going to the cathedral as I generally did, I went up to the printing room, so full of thoughts about my future that I was without sight or feeling. I leant out of the window, which looked over the courtyard of the Cordeliers,* mechanically watching the young beauties going in to service. My eyes dwelt in turn on dainty *Maine Blonde,* the grocer's daughter; on *Bourdignon,* a dazzling brunette; on stately *Legueux* and the artless *Carouge*; on lively, childlike *Hollier*, and voluptuous *Linard*, the mother of the lovely and now distinguished girls of that name. Mme Linard, married and almost as beautiful as was Colette and about her age, was leaning on the arm of a young man, and arrested my attention by the way in which she was devouring him with her glances. I was still watching her, when I heard some one call me from a neighbouring window. I turned, and saw *Annette Bourdeaux*, Antoine Foudriat's little niece, at the window just beyond M. Prudhot's. She was a pretty blonde though a trifle proud; the intended since childhood of a rich, pleasant-looking young man. In this way her parents had wisely fixed her imagination on one object, a plan soon to be adopted by Mme Parangon in my case; but the treatment should have begun at Courgis.† I was surprised that Annette should call to me! However I bowed to her and she responded coldly. "I thought you did me the honour to address me, Mademoiselle." "No, Monsieur, I did not speak." She smiled slightly as she spoke, which gave me the impression that she did not wish to admit her action, and I withdrew from the window. But I was called a second time, and putting my head out quickly, saw Annette looking another way. "She is having a game with me," I thought. "Well, she is young; let her amuse herself as much as she likes." I was called a third time. I was loth to disturb myself again, but I thought: "If Mlle Annette wants to amuse herself at my expense it is not for me to cross her. I am doing nothing discreditable, and to take no notice would seem rude, and my father told me that an honourable man is never disrespectful to a woman." So I looked out again. Annette had gone and her window was shut. Then I raised my eyes to a little window higher up, and there I saw a woman's hand and the edge of her sleeve. I coughed as naturally as I could, and the elder Mlle Prudhot came to the window and beckoned. I ran up to the attic, got out of a window, and walked along the gutter between the two roofs to the small round window lighting Jeannin's closet, which corresponded to the garret I occupied. I expected to find Manon with her elder sister; but when I put my head through the window, which was open, Goton Prudhot was alone. She started at hearing my voice so close to her. "Aren't you in danger of falling?" "No, Mademoiselle, I am quite safe between the roofs." "Do not go too near the edge." "Have no fear on my account, Mademoiselle." "Manon is ill, and we are very much afraid . . . of smallpox." "Ah, God! I am grieved indeed. It is a cruel disease." "It will be a pity if her pretty face is marked." "It will indeed, Mademoiselle. But her natural sweetness will remain to trouble only too many hearts!" "I called you to tell you the news." "I share your anxiety,

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*The printing establishment was separated from the monastery of the Cordeliers by an alley which led to their church. The dormitory of the apprentices looked down into the alley and a back-door (of which we hear in the sequel) opened into it. The Cordeliers claimed this alley as their property, and a law-suit on this dispute between them and Fournier dragged on in the courts for many years. [Ed.]

†See *Nouvel Abeillard* or *L'Amour par Lettres,* a most useful book for parents who want to keep their children's hearts and minds pure.

Mademoiselle. If only I could give my health for your dear sister's!" (the last two words were whispered). "I will tell her what you feel. Goodbye, I must leave you now to go to her." "I am overwhelmed by your kindness, Mademoiselle. If I dared, I would beg you . . . to allow me to. . . ." "No, no, when she is well again." She left the closet with a gracious gesture, and I returned to my little desk thinking of Manon. At this moment I verily believe she was dearer to me than . . . any other woman; and certainly than Madelon. The delicacy of the attentions she had shown me and the kindness of her elder sister touched me to the bottom of my heart. I felt that I loved everyone in that house as lover, son or brother.

I was still upon the threshold of life, still at the beginning of that great contest. I was inexperienced, warm-hearted, ardent, and simple-minded. I grew with every happening, and with each step along the course I had to traverse new sensations, new ideas blossomed round my feet. Happy times, whose happiness is only made aware by thought, I can recall you despite inexorable fate; I can realise, feel you still; and my frozen heart is melted, my tears fall upon this paper, recipient of my thoughts and of your fugitive image.

The family were out to supper and I was alone in the house. Bardet had gone home to Irancy; Tourangeot spent Sunday evenings with his mistress Marie, M. Parangon's former favourite; Tiennette and Thibaut were in the kitchen. At six o'clock the two lovers came in search of me, and the young man said: "M. Nicolas, one of my relations from Bar-sur-Seine is staying here, and wants me to have supper with him at his inn; he is a well-to-do uncle, and I very much want him to meet Mlle Tiennette, for I know he will like her when he has seen her; would you do me a favour?" "With all my heart, dear friend." "I knew it," said Tiennette. "Then come and have supper with us and my uncle, a worthy man; and at about half-past nine I will return to wait for the family, leaving you to bring Mlle Tiennette back, if that suits you?" "I have a better plan, my dear Thibaut. You go, the two of you, and have supper with your uncle. With a third person you could not talk so freely. I will look after the house, as I have nothing to go out for, and will be here when people come back. As they may return early, I will get the key of the wetting room and let you in that way. If anyone asks for you, I will say you are detained by a near relative; and, as for Tiennette, I will speak to Mme Parangon about her. Go; it is better and safer than leaving the house empty. They would not know what to think, and Tiennette must be kept clear of all scandal." They overwhelmed me with thanks. How sweet a pleasure to help two virtuous lovers! Sometimes we should find it was equal to their own, could we take their place! When they had left, I took my work into the parlour. At eight I had supper alone, and then went to lean over the door. Madelon and her sisters were out walking with their step-mother; *Marote*, their servant, a pretty girl of sixteen and worthy of her mistresses, had been told to join them when her work was done. She was just setting out and suggested that I should go with her. I told her I was keeping house to oblige Tiennette. "Your kindness will not be wasted," replied Marote. "If you only knew what she says about you to Mademoiselle!" (so Madelon was called at home). "But I must hurry, so as to meet them near the *Benedictines* where everyone is going to hear Mlle Maîne Lebègue* sing in the open." When she had gone, I glanced at Mlle Prudhot's door and, seeing it shut, went indoors again. I took up that author who gave me to despair, the too-perfect Racine, and read his *Andromache.*

*Cousin-german of Agnès Lebègue; they were the daughters of two brothers.

It was past ten and still no one had come in, when there was a knock at the shop door. I ran to it, hoping it was Tiennette and Thibaut. But it was Manon Bourgoin. "Alone?" "Yes, Mademoiselle." "Then where is Tiennette?" "She will be in soon." "Goodbye then; if I were found alone with a young man. . . ." She was just going out again, when she exclaimed: "There's a knock!" and slipped behind the screen. I let her hide, though I had heard nothing, and hurried to the door. There I found a Cordelier, Father or Brother Gaudet d'Arras, whom I knew by sight, and also by repute as a good fellow though something of a rake. He had no robe, but just his tunic, and was covered with dust and sweat, a terrible sight! (You are acquainted with this Cordelier, Reader. He is commemorated in the *Paysan-Paysanne Pervertis.*) "Is Parangon in?" "No, *Monsieur.*" (For I have never called a monk *Father* or *Brother* yet.) "Are you a good fellow?" "I pass for such in my humble circle." "And I begin to think so too." While speaking, he had crossed the shop and shut the doors. Mlle Bourgoin watched him without letting herself be seen. "I am on bad terms with brother porter," continued Gaudet d'Arras. "The outer door is shut and I cannot get it opened without a scandal. Let me in through your wetting-room door." "With pleasure, Monsieur; here is the key." At this second *Monsieur*, d'Arras put his hand on my shoulder. "*Monsieur* – that promises well, and shows I am not dealing with any credulous fool. You will keep my secret?" "Certainly, as I presume that talk would cause trouble." "Who are you?" he asked. "One of the apprentices." "Then Parangon has at last a pupil worthy of him. I will congratulate him." I opened the door of the wetting-room; once in the outer public courtyard, d'Arras had a key to the little door in the cloister, and inside, there were no difficulties. Sure now of being able to get in, he embraced me joyfully. "Brother Jean, the porter, played this trick on me," he said. "The other day he shot a warbler which was nesting in one of our fruit-trees and was the delight of the community. As I was kept from service by a cold, I saw him, and told the Superior, who made him eat on all-fours with the cats. He has revenged himself, as you see. You have done me a great service, especially as we have the Visiting Father with us. If I had slept out he would have heard about it to-morrow, and I could not have escaped a severe penance. Besides how could I have appeared in daylight in this condition? Till to-morrow, Monsieur. What name can I ask for? I must come and thank you again." "You owe me no thanks, Monsieur. I merely did for you what I would have had another do for me in like case. . . . My name is Nicolas." "Till to-morrow then, Monsieur Nicolas. My room is in the main corridor, number 12. Some one is coming!" And he went in quickly. As I was shutting the door, I noticed Brother Jean letting in a Cordelier by way of the church. We shall hear who it was.

Such was my introduction to Gaudet d'Arras. The service I did him was more important than he had imagined, owing to a complication which arose next day. For me, this friendship was to bring about an event which, for horror, was the most terrible of my life; and yet it might have made my fortune if fair hopes which were never realised had not led me to reject my chance. Later, my friend *Loiseau*, seeing his evil effect upon my character, separated me from this friend who, though less pure than himself, would in later life have been more useful.

Some one was knocking at the shop door as I returned. I was obliged to make them wait for a moment, as Manon Bourgoin wanted to get out by the wetting-room door. She dismissed me at once saying she would have no further difficulty. I never could conceive what became of her. . . . Free at last I hurried to the door.

It was my friends Tiennette and Thibaut, with the latter's uncle. After the usual compliments, the uncle asked in a whisper for a word in private. I took him aside, and he questioned me in detail about Tiennette. I told him the facts. The good man was delighted when I quoted instances, too trivial to be recorded here, of his future niece's kindness, wisdom, prudence and good household management. Old M. Thibaut declared himself quite satisfied with my unsupported testimony. "No, no," I said, "I have not sufficient weight. Come to-morrow and hear Mlle Tiennette commended by one more worthy to praise her. Mme Parangon herself will confirm what I have told you; a wife is the proper person to answer for a maid." "Wisely spoken!" exclaimed the old man, "and more like a man, and an old man at that, than a boy. Yes, yes, to-morrow I will come and see this kind and beautiful lady of whom I hear nothing but good." After the uncle had gone, escorted by his nephew, I left Tiennette to wait for the family, and went upstairs.

The most important event in the day was the one least in my thoughts; I scarcely troubled my head about Gaudet d'Arras. I had no love for monks, and I had helped this one through lack of malice rather than through good-will. Or rather I helped the man, not the monk. What did concern me was Manon Prudhot's illness; and the kind way in which her sister had spoken to me, which showed that I stood well with the whole family. . . . Then I thought of Madelon. Her words made a deeper impression on reflection than at first hearing; and I realised, by examining myself, how difficult it would be to leave the press and Colette's house for a purely commercial and unlearned calling. But Manon, tender Manon! and the sweet life with her in her dear parents' house, like Mme Jeudy's son-in-law, only happier! The joy of my people in seeing me so soon well married, and in a position to help my three younger brothers and even my cousins Mairat, the sons of my mother's sister. . . . These thoughts decided me, and I determined to offer my services next day to M. Prudhot. I even prepared my little speech, which I thought very good. . . . I was almost asleep when (was it a dream, or the effect of my disturbed imagination?) I heard, or thought I heard, Mme Parangon saying to Tiennette: "It would grieve me very much if Monsieur Nicolas left us. It was I who advised his parents to place him here; his career and future position are my business. I want to be a mother to him as long as I live!" (Oh, this woman, this woman, at once the scourge and the presiding goddess of my life!) I woke in amaze, jumped out of bed, and looked about. . . . Everything was quiet; there was no light in the sitting-room: so everyone must be in bed, unless in the "high room", and then the light would be at the front. Beside myself I fell on my knees, crying: "God, give me guidance! I feel I am at the critical turning point of my life. I see one certain road. I could settle my future by taking it. Ah, if you had been less bountiful it would have been better for me! Why is there not only one road to follow! No, happiness is not for me; I shall be the sport of fate; I feel it, I know it by this perplexity in which it pleases you to leave me. Decide for me, O God. My feeble understanding fails me, and I seek refuge in divine wisdom." I said no more, and got back to bed in a state of cruel indecision. Then kind sleep came with full hands, and showered her drowsy poppies over me.

I woke late next morning; but it was Monday, and the men, more tired out by rest than labour, never came early, so I was still the first at work. Thus I had time to go along the roof and ask little Jeannin how Mlle Manon was. I was told that the eruption had begun and was developing on very favourable lines. I asked him to entreat Mlle Goton to call me often to give me news of her sister. She did so, and I had the pleasure of speaking to her four or five times during the day.

The workmen arrived at nine, and had breakfast. Bardet, returned from Irancy that morning, enjoyed waiting on them, as he was something of a glutton and they used to treat him. I went on working. The foreman was not in good vein, though steady enough as a rule, and asked me to do his work. I finished it during the morning to his great satisfaction, for I heard him praising me to the others; and all were of his opinion, save Degout the Comtois, who was as malicious as Envy herself.

All the printing was done in a big room on the second floor; only the senior workman Yeury was on the first floor, with one press, the large founts for poster work, and the type used for other "town jobs", that is, leaflets for passing occasions, such as public or private notices, as distinguished from books. Everyone came together for breakfast in the big room where I was working, so I heard all that was said. Two of the pressmen, Lantrade and Gonnet, who had arrived half-way through breakfast, called for silence to relate a farcical incident in which they had taken part. "You tell it," Lantrade said to Gonnet, "I have a better use for my jaws." Here is Gonnet's story: "We were behind the Bénédictines with everyone else, to hear Maîne Lebègue sing, when Guigner, the recruiting officer, ran up quite out of breath. 'I am almost sure I saw my two big cousins in the rye with a couple of holybolies.' I told him he must have pretty good eyes, as it was impossible to see anything. However, he insisted that he had seen them, and that it would be a good joke to join the party. You know them: one is chambermaid at M. Trinquet's; the other does laundry work. Their name is Guigner too, but they are no more closely related to him than I am. We hurried to the place without making a sound, and found the two girls in the middle of the rye with two Cordeliers in their tunics. The robes made nice cushions for the girls. Guigner gave the signal and caught one of the monks, but the other escaped. The sergeant made his prisoner hand over all his money, about eighteen livres, giving back his robe in exchange. Then we let him go. Guigner told the two girls to follow us, and put on the other robe over his uniform. Near the Porte du Temple we met some people who did not know us, and were very much astonished to see a Cordelier in wig and plumes arming two girls. There will be a noise about it to-day, because when Guigner makes his round with drum and fife, he is going to take back the robe to the monastery, give it to Brother Jean, and tell him how he got hold of it."

I listened with the keenest interest. As Gonnet ended the story, I finished the foreman's work. I let him know, and while a proof was being taken off, slipped out. I knew where the Guigner sisters lived, and had met the chambermaid, as M. Trinquet, a man with a well-lined purse, was Bourgoin's uncle. Also they were high-class *Phrynes*, well-kept in their persons and frequenting the dancing halls, so I had often taken them love-letters from Fusier or Floriau. I was at their house in the twinkling of an eye. "Mademoiselle Goton," I said to the laundress, who was alone in the house, "there is something afoot which will cause you a good deal of unpleasantness, and may get you into trouble with the Mayor: Guigner, the recruiting-sergeant, means to make a scandal with the Cordelier's robe; if he does, the whole story will be raked up, and everyone will know you were in the rye yesterday with two monks. I advise you to prevent the sergeant from doing anything of the kind." "I have the robe here," cried Goton in a fright. "It was nothing more than a trick that my sister and I, helped by my cousin Guigner, played on that rich, dissolute young

Cordelier, Father d'Arras, for always making broad jokes directly he gets anywhere near us." "The trick will be turned on you," I replied. "Trust me, and give me the robe quickly; I will get it to its owner secretly, by our back door, and all will end there. There is just time, but you must be quick. Avoid a publicity which can only do you harm!" "Gracious, here, take it!" I did not need to be asked twice. I folded the robe so that I could carry it in my apron. "Not a word," I said as I was going. "I do not want to get into trouble for having helped you." I left at once, luckily, for twenty paces from the *Sabot* (where the Guigners lodged) I met the recruiting sergeant. He asked me if Lantrade and Gonnet had told us a good story? "Yes," I cried as I ran past him, "and I advise you to leave matters alone." He went to see Goton, who abused him roundly, and scolded him for having forced her to give an assignation to two monks and then exposed her, by his imprudence, to being haled before the mayor. She added, in spite of what I had said, that she had just asked me to return the robe. The sergeant gave her a cuff and followed it with a kick, and then ran after me. But it was like a fat pug after a deer. Instead of going through the shop, I entered the Cordeliers by the *rue de la Poissonnerie*, and, as the garden door was open, reached the cloisters without being seen. It was eleven o'clock. I met Brother Jean, who said: "Good day, neighbour. How did you get in?" "By the garden. I want Father Villetard." (We happened at the moment to have some kind of balderdash to print for this idiot, who belonged to one of the richest families in the town.) Brother Jean gave me his number, which was eight. But I went straight to No. 12 where d'Arras lived, and knocked. Silence. I said who I was. Then the door opened, and there was my man still in his tunic and almost in despair. "Ah, my friend, I am lost!" he said to me. "Will you oblige me by going to the Father

Warden and begging him to come to me here?" "First let me give you back your robe." And I threw it on the bed. He stood and stared at me in amazement. Then, beside himself, he threw himself at my feet. "If you are not the devil, you are an angel sent to save me," he said. "I swear eternal friendship with you. You have done me as great a service as if you had snatched me from the hands of an executioner." I told him briefly how I had found out where his robe was, and how obtained it. He could not look at or listen to me enough. "Since early this morning all my efforts to get hold of a new robe have failed," he told me. "I should have had either to appear in the refectory in a tunic, or risk being examined in my room. The Father Warden is a friend of mine; but he has not got the key of the wardrobe while the Visiting Father is here; though it is not usual, it was given to the Visiting Father himself this morning. I tried to get in with the help of my yesterday's companion; he pretended to need a change of robe, and would have got me in at the same time, but some one went with him. Finally, when eleven struck, I was in despair; I dared not risk going to the Father Warden in a vest, for fear of meeting some one in the corridor. . . . But an angel has come to save me, to save me in the best way possible; since now that I have my own robe, I need not tell my secret to anyone. O my friend. . . . But goodbye for the moment . . . I must run to the refectory." For my part I hurried into the press by the backdoor. I saw Guigner in the parlour, where M. Parangon was detaining him as he did not care to let a man of that kind any further into his house. I returned to my work, and Guigner, when at last he was let through, found me in front of my case. But as M. Parangon was with him, he dared not mention the real object of his visit, and invented some other pretext. At dinner-time he met the printers at Anieli's Inn, where they lodged, and told them that I had carried off the monk's robe. Strangely enough they maintained in all honesty that he was wrong, stating that I had not left my work for a moment. He did not know what to think. They went to Goton who, so I should not be compromised, improved on her tale and suggested that Brother Boulanger, a friend of d'Arras, had disguised himself and borrowed my name. And there the matter ended.

This adventure was the talk of the house after dinner. Tourangeot related it to M. and Mme Parangon, arranging the details to his taste, and praising the supposed skill of Boulanger in getting hold of his friend's robe. At about half-past four, Mme Parangon, catching sight of me as I was taking a proof to her husband, asked me if I knew any further details. "Yes, Madame, and I do not think it would be breaking my promise of secrecy if I told you the whole story." (A lover longs to confide secrets to his divinity as he longs to do her service.) "Is it a secret? Then are you mixed up in this business?" "Very much so, Madame!" "But how? I shall not betray you," she added smiling, "your trust shall be kept intact." I told her all that I had seen and done, from the previous evening to the moment when I had taken back the robe to d'Arras, and also about the statement made by the workmen, of which I had just heard; for this cleared me with the sergeant, who might have been a danger had his version been confirmed. Colette held her breath as she listened. When I had finished her lovely eyes were shining; she half stretched out her arms, and then restrained herself. "Do you approve, Madame?" "Do I approve? . . . To-day has added more to my esteem for you than any that went before. Your trust is sacred; even from M. Parangon. You understand?" I told her that Manon Bourgoin had called some minutes before d'Arras, and had seen him without being seen. "Now it is my turn to tell you a secret," she said, “and though it nearly concerns two people, I will trust you with it. D’Arras is trying to get released from his vows, and if he succeeds, he is going to marry that friend of mine you have just mentioned!” “Mademoiselle B . . . Bourgoin? Oh, he must be more careful!” “She will overlook anything: he will have an income of twenty thousand francs.” “I think he has a good heart, Madame.” “Ah, how pleased I am to hear you say so. I will tell Manon Bourgoin that! See him sometimes, and study him; you will have opportunities: so you will do a service to a friend I dearly love, and to whose mother I owe a very great deal. Speak well of her to d’Arras; I guarantee you will risk nothing by it.”

Glorious mission! I still swell with pride at the thought of it! I performed it, and performed it well. God knows that even to possess my idol would not have been so sweet a pleasure as this help and service to her through a friend. A friend indeed! For, as much solicited by the faithless husband as by the wife, she arranged with the latter what desires to arouse, what torments to inflict, the very sighs she uttered; and only granted to the husband what might most favour the wife. And I was able to give my divinity the joy and satisfaction of thinking: “I am doing my true friend a service, through a man as devoted to me as she is.” I enabled her to feel that she was doing all she could for one who every day befriended her. Great ones of the world, I envy you not! My glory is a satisfaction of the heart; yours is a mere illusion of the mind. But I must return to my story, interrupted by my impetuous emotions just as I was about to make answer to Mme Parangon.

“It is my pleasure to fulfil your wishes, Madame,” I said. “I am only too happy to obey you in anything.” “I believe you, Monsieur Nicolas.” She blushed, and turned away her eyes, and, seeing that I was dismissed, I went upstairs to her husband. . . . Sweet, gentle dove! I should indeed be beyond pardon, if you yourself, for love of your dearest friend, had not ordained an understanding which was to be so fatal to us both.

On my return, Mme Parangon said: "I cannot get your story out of my head. He said you were *either a devil or an angel,*" and she laughed: "How strange he is! . . . Still I think I can see a good disposition behind his words: but not in what he does, which . . . perhaps he has been corrupted . . . Be careful!" "These monkish vices are no danger to me, Madame," I replied with rash confidence. Her husband came down, and I hurried away with the proof, which was urgent.

[How full they were, these days of my springtime! I was journeying through a fruitful country watered by the river of life, to leave it, alas, one day, and pursue my way through arid lands. But as yet I had my virtue still, and, if I dwell on all the good I did, it is that you may love me, Reader, while I deserve it, and pity rather than hate me in my later degradation!]

When we rose from table that evening I went out for a moment's talk with Madelon Baron. She mentioned the monk, but I pretended to know nothing of the matter. Then she turned the conversation to Manon's illness; showing great concern, and finding a number of nice things to say about her, while I wondered at the pretty speaker's sweet and generous disposition. While we were talking I kept an eye on our door, and saw the foreman leave with the master, instead of waiting to escort Mme Parangon. I returned to the house at once. Colette had stayed indoors, no doubt to talk over Gaudet d'Arras's adventures. She asked me about the same things over and over again. Bourgoin had gone to fetch his cousin, she said; and when she had dismissed him, she would tell her friend that I often had occasion to see M. d'Arras, at the same time advising her never to speak about me to him or give any sign that she knew me, so that d'Arras should not be on his guard, and I could get to know him better. She added that she had seen Thibaut's uncle, and, as she had nothing but good to say of Tiennette, had sent him away rejoicing. "I told him that my one regret was that this marriage would deprive me of a friend rather than a servant; but that I was more than glad she was marrying well and had found as steady a husband as Thibaut. . . . I marvel," she continued, "at the people I find around me since my return from Paris. I do not think anyone could have a pleasanter household. The foreman is a good fellow, hard-working and skilful as you know – M. Parangon gives him credit for this." "He is right, Madame; he is a first-class craftsman." "I say nothing of you; I might be accused of vanity if I praised you. Our men are working better than I have ever known them, except that Degout." (She forgot to except her husband, but she could not well speak of him.) "Tourangeot is intelligent and willing, and I have seen few men as well-behaved and docile as Thibaut. You know my Tiennette as well as I do myself; simple without being stupid, she has developed visibly since my return. . . . I shall mourn for her, believe me! What happy chance brings such people about me? . . . But let us talk of our dear little neighbour." I responded feelingly to all she said, and then unbosomed myself as to the Prudhot family's proposals. Colette seemed thoughtful. I stopped. "What is there to hinder you?" she asked. "The thought of leaving you, Madame," I replied simply, "of not living in your house – that is what holds me back." "And does Mlle Baron count for nothing?" "I have a great admiration for her, but she has nothing to do with my indecision." "You are quite sure?" "As sure as I am of my profound respect for you, Madame." "Monsieur Nicolas, I know your family; it is older than mine and, in some directions, better connected; it is less wealthy, but in no way inferior. We have common relatives in the Quatrevaux, the Gauthiers, and the Linards. . . . Have you met my sister Fanchette?" "Yes, Madame; I saw her at Vermenton the day my father and mother introduced me to M. Parangon." "What did you think of her?" "Charming – I would almost dare to say, adorable, as you are." "She is still very young, but it would be unsuitable if she were older. . . . You know I have a great deal of influence with my family, and especially with my father?" "Yes, Madame; at your home, as here, everyone is made happy when you deign to express a wish that they can fulfil." "If you go on as you have begun, I think it should not be difficult . . . it should be easy . . . I could almost guarantee to arrange your marriage some day with my sister Fanchette." "Ah, Madame, if I could entertain such a hope. . . ." "I think you may. . . ." I made no reply, but ventured to take her hand and kiss it. Tears were in my eyes. "What, are you in love with my sister? She is only a child." "She is your sister, Madame; that is (forgive the expression!) she is of the blood of Gods." "Ah, Monsieur Nicolas, if that is what you feel I promise her to you . . . indeed, I think I owe you something," she added smiling, "for you are making a sacrifice to stay in my house. . . ." She stopped: I was still holding her hand, and raised my face to hers – and for the first time braved her eyes looking directly into mine. "You have given me courage, Madame, and nothing can destroy it. I cannot say that I adore Mlle Fanchette, but I adore her sister; I adore virtue and beauty personified, as all mortals must adore it." "I can see nothing . . . incorrect . . . in your sentiments," she returned, her voice trembling slightly, "and it gives me pleasure to tell you so." "Oh, Madame, how memorable you have made this evening! . . . I shall never forget it! The twenty-seventh of

May will always be a red-letter-day for Nicolas-Edmond. I shall fill my heart with the glorious hope that you have graciously given me. Your image and Mlle Fanchette's shall be enthroned there; the one will sometime be . . . the object of all . . . my love, the other will be – my goddess; thus I can adore them both." I stopped, and Colette was silent too. I strove to find words, but could not. From time to time I glanced at her, as she sat motionless with her beautiful eyes fixed upon the ground. Had I tried to rise, I think I could not have done so; I was as though chained to my chair. New prospects had enlarged my future – a settlement that would gratify my parents more than any other marriage. I had the chance, the certainty, of giving my father a girl to whom no one in the district would have dreamt I could aspire; the daughter of his most honoured friend, a member of a family respected throughout the district for the position occupied by its head. I should be (and this was the real cause of my rapture) the brother of Mme Parangon and, as my sister, I could freely cherish her. No more indecision! My mind was made up, and relieved of a wearisome burden. I felt like a man who, couched on a soft lawn, watches the raging sea from which he has just escaped. Pure and unalloyed happiness, free from any painful sacrifice, stretched before me. I tasted perfect bliss; for I desired nothing but what was ensured to me. My beloved was with me, and it was she who had made me happy. I was free from anxieties, doubts, regrets, repentance and remorse . . . from remorse, which for so long now has been the torment of my heart! Nowadays, when I want to envisage happiness, I carry my mind back to this scene, unique in my life; when love, temperament, prudence, ambition, honour, glory, reason and expediency were all, all satisfied and the future lay like a gentle caress upon my heart.

Bourgoin returned bringing his cousin with him; but before he left, Goton Prudhot came to give us news of her sister, who was doing as well as could be hoped. Mme Parangon and Mlle Bourgoin went to see the invalid; the foreman followed them, and I was left alone until M. Parangon returned. So I went to bed without seeing Colette again.

The following day d'Arras came and asked to see me. M. Parangon rang for me. "I will leave you together," he said to the young Brother, and went up to his office. "Get your key and come into our courtyard," d'Arras said. "We shall be freer there than here." He took me into an outside garden, which then belonged to the monastery but was afterwards let for life to Councillor Raffin. We walked up and down for about half-an-hour, while he told me the rest of the story of the robe: "My enemies (for I have some) knew of my difficulty and, without my knowing anything about it, told the Warden, so as to make it impossible for him to help me. Thus, but for you, I was certain to be caught, and they were gloating over me already. Headed by that idiot Villetard, it was they who made the wardrobe brother hand the key over to the Visiting Father this morning. My companion, who concealed this from me to save me from utter despair, got permission to go into the wardrobe, and tried to put on two robes at once; but Pierre, the wardrobe brother, saw him, and said: 'You mustn't do that! I would take one to brother d'Arras myself if it were possible. You will only get into trouble yourself without helping him; you would be examined before getting to his room or your own.' 'If I am caught, I will say that I am keeping the old robe and the new.' 'That is no good! No brother is allowed two robes since a father was imprudent enough to smuggle a girl into his room dressed as a Cordelier. Since then they are always afraid lest the robes will be used as a disguise.' In short, I blessed the moment when you brought back that robe, as heartily as I have cursed the day of my compulsory vows. Properly dressed, I went at once to the Warden, and complained of Brother Pierre for having refused me a robe. 'What is the one you are wearing?' 'Mine. Look; everyone knows it.' 'I am delighted – for your sake and (under his breath) for mine.' He summoned Brother Pierre and reprimanded him, adding that I was entitled to some consideration for my good conduct and what I had done for the monastery. The brother stared at me – petrified! He touched my robe. 'It certainly is his!' he muttered. 'What did you say?' asked the Warden. 'I said, Father, that there are some lying tongues about, because this is certainly Brother d'Arras's robe.' We went to the refectory. My comrade of the night before, who was shaking in his shoes for himself and for me, was reassured to see me properly dressed; and the other scoundrels as they came in one after another had faces a yard long; for they all recognised my robe, and only my own robe could have saved me. Luckily, I did not know this until after the danger was over. The Warden then spoke with the authority of his position, and praised me to the Visiting Father; so this dangerous man never knew a thing for certain, because my enemies had no proof against me. The Visitor left this morning, accompanied by the Warden. Steps are being taken to find out everything that is said about me in the monastery; and all my letters, in and out, are to be opened for a considerable time. Such is the order; and anyone who does not obey will be reported and punished. It was the Visitor himself who pronounced the injunction. But the Warden has just given me a sharp reprimand, for he knows something of the business. I admit he was in the right. I have plans: I want to be released from my vows; and if I succeed in that, love has already chosen a wife for me. In the meantime, I mean to devote myself entirely to her, as my mistress, and to you as the dearest of my friends. You know the girl I love: she is Mme Parangon's friend. Say a favourable word for me if you have the chance; for I am not a bad fellow: a few escapades do not make a scoundrel. I want to owe as much as possible to you, so that our friendship will be proof against anything. Let us share all our secrets, griefs, and pleasures. I have more experience than you and may be able to guide you."

Although I did not feel specially inclined to make a confidant and friend of a monk, I was guided by my desire to oblige Mme Parangon and received Gaudet d'Arras's overtures gratefully. He made me promise to "thou" him, and invited me to breakfast in his room on the following Sunday. I accepted reluctantly. All my life I have made good use of my time, and it is only idlers and gluttons who welcome occasions for diversion or feasting. Even when he accepts such an invitation for the sake of the people he will meet there, the worker finds it a hindrance, and a loss of time difficult to make good.

We are now at the 24th of June, the date on which I began to keep my verses; all the earlier ones have been destroyed, or lost, because I wrote them on loose sheets. Now I made myself a book in which to record the songs I was told, and my verses, whether inspired by my charmer of the moment, or written on behalf of a friend. For the love-letters I used to write for the workmen had given me some reputation, and this had spread beyond the house since Bardet, who was a chatterbox, had had the business of delivering them. The first poem in my book was written for Breugnot, with whom I had made friends again. He had fallen in love with Mlle Manon Minon, sister of M. Minon, his master. He wrote describing his cruel torments to the fair Manon, but his prose was not honoured with a reply. He reflected that verses might have a happier fate; but he did not know how to write them. So he had recourse to me. But I soon found that I could not write verse to order. I worked slavishly and without inspiration. My poem was so bad, that when in the *Ménage Parisien* I wanted to make Sotentout appear ridiculous, I thought I could not do better than put into his mouth the verses I wrote for Breugnot. Here is the invocation:*

> *Fly, letter, to her whose every charm I love; who, hearing me, would not hear me: carry the tears of a Lover who is on fire for her beauty.*†

The rest was in key with this. Breugnot wanted it all in rhyme even to the final compliment, with which I brought it to an end on the same day:

> *It would be impossible, Mademoiselle, to add to the tenderness of the feeling with which you enchant my senses.*

It is noteworthy that this ridiculous epistle was so bad that Manon Minon thought it really was written by Breugnot, and thanked the supposed author for it personally, although in some lines he treated her cavalierly enough:

> *The tender love I bore in my bosom wearies at length with too long waiting! That should not be the way of Beauty. Surely, Mademoiselle, you know that one should comfort a loving heart, whose only crime is to be over-fond. Being downcast and languishing and filled with weakness, am I not worth a trifle of concern from you? Yes, yes, you know I am, and therefore I can find no excuse for you. Yet forgive me this quick anger, dearest, and do not share it. A deep*

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*This is the title-page of my note-books: *Nicolai Edmundi Annæ Augustini Restifii Saxiacensis Carmina quæ cecinit in vitæ suæ infortuniis. Primus Codex. Anno* 1752. At that time I called my experiences at Courgis, my little troubles on my arrival in Auxerre and the continual ferment of my emotions caused by Mme Parangon misfortunes! They have grown somewhat since then!

†Restif's own verse is poor stuff, as he himself is the first to admit. Any charm it may have lies in the peculiar facility offered by the French language to the rhymester, and an attempt to render it, with all its weakness and repetition, into English verse would reflect little credit on either Restif or the translator, and could add nothing to the reader's pleasure. Hence a prose version is given of this and all his subsequent poems. [Ed.]

> *and passionate and ardent love cannot endure your flouting. My eager wish not to displease you now makes me leave my desk.*

That is enough, and too much, to give an idea of this composition, which I made somewhat more ridiculous than it need have been, as a little repayment for Breugnot's indiscretions about Mlle Baron. Breugnot was so pleased with my verses (which he was careful to copy out before sending) and with what little success they had, that he asked me to write a song to the air "Arise, Fair Sleeper." Amazed at his stupidity, I resolved to make him one in which rhyme, rhythm and stress were so idiotically unsuited to the tune, that it would make him thoroughly ridiculous, and he would never come and pester me again. I wrote this song as though to a male friend: which of itself was in sufficiently bad taste to give even Breugnot to think:

> *It is to you my feeble languishing song must tell the most unseemly behaviour of my proud inconstant Manon.*
> *Yet no, for to a peevish humour, an inveterate melancholy and depression, I add this other fatal quality: I do not want to be consoled.*
> *My inhuman lady has so many beauties that to see her in another's arms would more disturb me than never holding her myself.*
> *Yes, if Manon has duped me with her elegant ways, her ardent eyes, the conduct of her skirt; then nothing is left that can distress me any more.*

* * * * * * * * * * *

> *The lilies shone in her titties, and swelled under her sighs; those mounds of snow which were always about to break through her bodice.*
> *Her lips are just opened roses of a dazzling redness, nor are those odorous flowers so sweetly scented.*
> *But who could well enough describe the soft charm of your exquisite eyes, your dazzling colours, your noisy laugh, the burning gold of your hair?*
> *Her fair cheeks are pimpled and agreeably plump; they are scattered with carnation buds, and these often bleed.*

> *Such is she whom I love, and I have told nothing but the truth of her; she is as fair of soul as of body; her heart is the equal of her beauty.*
>
> *Her natural compliance makes her most human; to me alone is she cruel, and do you know why, poor fool?*
>
> *It is because I should have flattered her vanity by talking of marriage; she means to make a slave of any lover who will sell his liberty.*
>
> *I am leaving this disastrous place at last, for it is the tomb of my happiness; I shall take what remains to me to Chatillon, a place I left erewhile.*
>
> *It is too much; cease, cease, O memory of my bitter pains! I have told our story, Manon, wishing to boast of your harshness.*

This absurd song had thirty stanzas; the other seventeen I have omitted for their bad taste and childish indecency. I expected Breugnot to throw them in my face when he had read a couple of verses; but, to my great astonishment, he found them *delicious* (the cant phrase of the moment), and he sang them less badly than some better songs, though it needed some twisting to get his mouth round the words. He especially admired the subtlety of the last stanza: he never had the slightest suspicion that it was a reprimand on my part. I was flabbergasted. "Zounds, I must let him give her the thing! She will laugh at him and he will know better another time." So I left him.

The following day I heard that Breugnot had copied out the thirty stanzas and sent them to Mlle Minon, with a fine letter explaining the parts he did not understand and interpreting them in his own way. Mlle Minon wrote a sensible letter in reply begging M. Breugnot to cease his addresses, as she would rather remain single than become Mme Breugnot. The love-lorn fool immediately decided to entreat his guardian, Canon *Jodon*, to send him to Chatillon, hoping that the banks of the Seine would look more kindly on him than those of the Yonne. He left a few days later, and *Louis Gaudet* of Varzy took his place in M. Minon's office.

The new clerk was a big, lusty youngster, with round shoulders and an awkward carriage. His face was well enough, with large sensual eyes, and a very long nose. As is common with extremely healthy boys, he had paid little attention at school; and having learnt nothing, he had no principles, and was as eager for pleasure as any other lad of eighteen on leaving a little village in the woods, where there was nothing to see or do, to come to a town where adventures happened without looking for them. Surplus energy and excess of "temperament" made him verbally obscene, but he was not yet depraved at heart as was d'Arras.

Breugnot left without saying goodbye to me; not because he had any grudge against me, but because I was very busy. I was surprised to hear he had gone, and went out that evening on purpose to make sure. I questioned Marie, the servant, a Vermenton girl: "Oh yes, Monsieur, he has gone, and good riddance! He put me out of all patience with his stupid 'poems' as he called them, saying them to me all day long."(Without comment, I raised my hat, as the compliment was to my address.) "A big lad has come instead of him, from Varzy in Puisaye." Gaudet, hearing us speak of him, came up. "Monsieur Gaudet," said Marie, "this is a gentleman from my own district, and a friend of M. Breugnot, your predecessor." "Gad, then, he must be mine too!" said the Varziaçois, holding out a hand as big as a shoulder of mutton. "If you have lost a friend in Breugnot, you must accept me in compensation. Will you take me for what I am worth?" "You do me too much honour," I replied. I found the fellow's appearance and his frank manner prepossessing: perhaps, too, my obvious superiority to him flattered my vanity. We shook hands and were friends at once.

I will pass over the details of my daily interviews with Mme Parangon, as nothing remarkable occurred in them; also of those with Mlle Goton

Prudhot, who kept me exactly informed of her sister's progress day by day; of those with elder Mlle Baron, who showed me the most gratifying kindness, and finally of those I had with Tiennette, while the preparations for her marriage were being concluded. This marriage took place; the happy Thibaut carried off his pretty wife to Troyes, and I lost a true friend. But in those happy days, I always gained more than I lost; as we shall see, when I introduce *Toinette.*

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME IN
RESTIF'S EDITION

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## PROJECTED BY THE AUTHOR

## FOR THIS VOLUME

### 17. THE GIRL'S FOOTPRINTS

*Monsieur Nicolas accosting the girl from Laloge, whom he has followed by her footprints in the soft earth. They are under the walnut trees: "But who are you, pretty traveller?"* [*Page* 7]

### 18. THE BOOBY

*Monsieur Nicolas is talking to Mme Parangon, then just married but staying with her father. He is standing with lowered eyes while Mlle Jacquette points him out, laughing, to the three young men she has just called in. . . . Mme Collet, Jacquette, little Fanchette, the two Mlles Compagnot and a cook are present. One of the clerks is saying: "How stupid he looks!"* [*Page* 17]

### 19. ARRIVAL IN THE TOWN

*Monsieur Nicolas in M. Parangon's parlour with the tall Mlle Gauthier, who seems to find his luggage in her way: "Do you mean to leave that stuff there?" (See Arrival in Town in the* Paysan Perverti.*)* [*Page* 53]

### 20. THE PRINTING ROOM

*Monsieur Nicolas, escorted by his fellow prentice young Boudard, in the middle of the printing room. Pressmen and compositors are in their places. Two young women are laughing at his embarrassment, and one is saying: "He will last well." "Why?" "So green!"* [*Page* 55]

### 21. TIENNETTE RESCUED

*Monsieur Nicolas, having rushed into a room in response to the cry: "Help! Help!" is petrified by seeing the master setting upon Tiennette: "You are very bold to come into a room in which I am!"* [*Page* 74]

### 22. EDMÉE SERVIGNÉ

*Monsieur Nicolas at the fair in a meadow at Vaux. He catches sight of Edmée Servigné, whom he takes for Jeannette Rousseau because of her figure and dress. Aimée Châtelaine is saying: "I see what is in your mind, and you are right!" In the background, Catherine, her brother and her sister-in-law.* [*Page 83*]

### 23. THE ARRIVAL OF THE MISTRESS; TAKING OFF HER SHOES

*Monsieur Nicolas in a rapture of admiration, while Mme Parangon (in a bodice) is having her shoes taken off by Tiennette: "What you have told me . . . gives me great pleasure!"* [*Page 110*]

### 24. WITH A PRETTY PRUDE

*Monsieur Nicolas in front of Manon Prudhot's door; he is holding her hand, when her mother and sister come out unexpectedly: "No, no! You are very well as you are!"* [*Page 145*]

### 25. GAUDET D'ARRAS; MANON BOURGOIN

*Monsieur Nicolas letting in a Cordelier, dressed only in a tunic and in great disorder, after Manon has hidden herself; she can be seen watching everything from behind a screen: "Who are you?" "An apprentice."* [*Page 155*]

# THE

# FOURTH EPOCH

*Continued*

1752-1753

# FOURTH EPOCH

## (*continued*)

THE place of our beloved Tiennette was taken by a girl called *Reine* whom Tourangeot named *Reine II*, in memory of her notorious predecessor during the time that M. Parangon was a widower. She was a bad character and her example, although I despised her, had a damaging effect on my morals. I came upon her by accident with the foreman, a lusty fellow abounding in health, and with Tourangeot; and, what was worse for me, unmistakably engaged with M. Parangon! She was a tall, well-made girl, but, though others found her attractive, her hard, masculine features repelled me. In spite of her favours, Tourangeot told tales about her to Mme Parangon and she was dismissed. Then we had a little Comtoise called Brigitte for a few days, who was so wanton that she imparted an atmosphere of licence to the whole house, with the exception of its Mistress. Directly the scandal reached Mme Parangon's offended ears, she wrote to her parents for some one older, and Jeanneton arrived: a woman of forty to forty-five and toothless. Jeanneton was well-to-do; she had saved, and also had a small property in her village; she dressed neatly and even with a touch of coquetry, after the manner of Marguerite Pâris, and this appealed to M. Tourangeot's senses as her money did to his interests. She was quite aware of it, and hoped to get him for a husband, although she knew of his understanding with M. Parangon's old favourite – in whom, by the way, the Master himself was still so deeply interested that he continued to visit her clandestinely and with the greatest possible secrecy, when he knew that his Tourangeot was safely occupied elsewhere. Jeanneton was disappointed; not because Tourangeot was faithful to Marie, but because his master, when sounded, was not disposed to let him throw her over. Tourangeot's way of making love to Jeanneton, before this point was decided, was somewhat peculiar. Every evening after supper, in the presence of Bardet and Jean Lelong (a young peasant of Migé who had succeeded Thibaut), Tourangeot would take the old spinster on his knees and throw her legs above her head, by a dexterous movement of his own worthy of Nicolet's tumblers, while Lelong laughed foolishly and Bardet, thoroughly depraved in the printing house, encouraged the ex-Tartar with vulgar schoolboy tricks. Jeanneton put up with everything as long as there was a hope of marriage, but when she saw that Marie could not be dislodged she stopped this fooling and left a few days later.

Toothless Jeanneton was followed by the prettiest peasant I have ever seen, *Toinette Dominé* of *Toury*. She was Tiennette's cousin, and would have taken her place at once if she could have got her parents' leave; for Tiennette had made me write to her about it a fortnight before the former's marriage. Toinette came from Toury, a small village near Avallon. . . .

I will pause here to return to the breakfast to which d'Arras had invited me. Before it I had several chats with Louis Gaudet, as I had liked him better on our second meeting; his frank, unhesitating friendliness pointed to a good heart. On Saturday I suggested that he should come with me to the party, not particularly caring to be alone in a company of monks. He accepted gladly and, in the evening, I spoke to d'Arras and introduced him to Gaudet. "Your name is Gaudet?" said the monk. "Then *gaudeamus!* . . . But where do you come from?" "From Varzy." "From Varzy! And I am from Troyes and my name is Gaudet d'Arras." "Gaudet d'Arras!" cried the young clerk. "Ah! my dear cousin!" "Touching reunion!" said d'Arras embracing him. "Shall we weep?" "Faith, no! I am much too pleased to find a cousin in the friend of my friend to do anything but laugh." "Then again *gaudeamus!*" answered d'Arras. "Till to-morrow; and my friends, be in time! Eight o'clock at the latest, but a little earlier would be better, because of High Mass." "At seven then," said Gaudet. "I am always hungry two hours before I get up."

We were at the monastery next morning before eight. D'Arras had a cheerful room looking on to the garden; and a pleasant fragrance rose from the dishes set out upon the table. Twenty-eight bottles were ranged on a shelf, one twenty-five years old, two twenty-four, three twenty-three, four twenty-two, five twenty-one, six twenty, four nineteen and three only four. The last three were to be drunk immediately before the twenty-five year bottle. Thus, by selection and age, all the wines of Burgundy were represented in the wine of the one town. They were a present to d'Arras from M. Bourgoin, M. Parangon's friend and the father of d'Arras's future wife. This clever surgeon kept the best table in town, and the one the Master set above all others; it was the epicures' paradise. M. Bourgoin was Lodge Master, and the meetings were held at his house; and, as he was rich, he often entertained his guests. The age of each bottle was marked in wax on the top of the cork. . . . We were thirteen at table: Gaudet d'Arras, the Warden and the *Vicaire;* d'Arras's friend of the adventure in the rye; Brother Boulanger, a tall good-looking young monk; pretty-faced Brother Saint-Hermine; Father Villetard and three other of d'Arras's enemies; Gaudet, Bourgoin, the foreman, and myself. We had three young rabbits roasted, sheeps' tongues from Troyes, two salted capons; a dish of sausages prepared in white wine by the pastry-cook Julien, who did them excellently, and served hot; hare, partridge, and eel pies; preserved fruits, and biscuits to dip in the muscat wine. Joy shone on the faces of all ten monks at the sight of the spread table. A few jests passed as we fell to. All twenty-eight bottles were uncorked. I took half a glass of the twenty-five-year-old vintage, and that was all I had; and Bourgoin kept to one bottle; yet despite the moderation of two of the guests, the wine gave out half-way through the meal. The same quantity of champagne followed, and new dishes appeared. D'Arras had taken care to give good portions to the service brother, the porter and the scullion, which made the two last his friends for ever. Finally the dessert and muscat wine were attacked, and everything disappeared. Then the clock struck, and Fathers and Brothers staggered to their feet to attend High Mass, which was sung with considerable heartiness. Gaudet, Bourgoin and I were sitting in the Fathers' stalls, so I could watch the worshippers – working-class girls who attended this church for all the offices. One of them glanced from time to time at the *Vicaire*, a handsome enough fellow; another was looking stealthily at Brother Boulanger; a third at Saint-Hermine; a fourth at Gaudet d'Arras; Father Symphorien was not neglected, and Brother Polyeucte's good looks received their tribute of admiration. . . . I was greatly surprised, for my principles were still pure and wholesome, and I groaned in my heart for the depravity of the age.

After Mass we took leave of the monks; Gaudet, Bourgoin and I. "I must thank you," said M. Minon's new clerk to me, "for a party which I have thoroughly enjoyed from every point of view; for I owe it to the kindness of a friend and my host was a relative I had never met before, although I had heard about him without having any idea that he was here." "I am only too delighted if I have procured you any pleasure," I replied, "but had it not been for the lucky meeting with your cousin, I should have been afraid it would have been the reverse." "What do you mean? You give me my first chance of coming into contact with monks, for whom I still had a respect; you enlighten and broaden my mind by giving me the wine of Gods to drink and most excellent food to eat! You must be joking!" Bourgoin had already left us, and I parted from Gaudet in my turn to go and do an hour or two's work before dinner; for never in all my life has any meal disturbed my brain to the extent of taking away my taste for work.

I was in a very pleasant state of mind! Though my breakfast at the monastery did not square with my principles, Mme Parangon's express wish that I should cultivate Gaudet d'Arras relieved me of any regrets; I had no anxiety for the future; it was already settled in a way to fulfil all my parents' hopes. Mlle Fanchette! . . . My mother had spoken of her more than once and always with delight. I recalled her words and her shy speculations, and said to myself: "I shall bring true what she scarcely dared even to wish for." If now and then I sighed for Manon Prudhot, or dreamed of Madelon Baron, the thought of Mlle Fanchette, inseparable in my mind from that of her sister, brought me back to decision and repose. . . . I worked that day better than usual; I understood my Terence better (at least it seemed so to me) and rendered his turns of phrase more easily and naturally into French. . . . I did not stay long in this blissful Eden: sin was soon to drive me forth from it!

I liked d'Arras, and saw a good deal of him; he and Gaudet were the friends who shared my heart. But the former had the advantage of experience and was my mentor; whereas the latter looked up to me as his master, guide and oracle. Unfortunately, as I became more intimate with d'Arras, I was led insensibly to confide the state of my affections. I spoke, without naming or in any way committing them, of Mlle Prudhot (who was still unwell, so that I had not seen her since our charming conversation), of Madelon, and even of Fanchette; and perhaps he read in my eyes and in my manner, and in a word or two which involuntarily escaped me, my love for the woman I adored. D'Arras was an attentive listener; he saw how innocent was my heart, and, out of friendship (for never will I believe that he intended all the harm he did me), took my training in hand. He warned me to shun romantic passions which could only make me unhappy, and added: "The only way to avoid being enslaved and submerged by women is to possess the ones you love. Thus you change parts with them and, master of your own feelings, become inaccessible to that excessive perturbation which they foster. Instead of being dependent on women, they will depend on you. You will be their master and all the more loved for that." He illustrated his point from people we knew in the town: handsome Rütot, run after by all the work girls and even by some belonging to the middle class, because of his contemptuous indifference to them; himself only scorned by one, *Xérine Legueux*, and that because he cringed to her. (I could not deny the excellence of this example, having myself written several letters for Rütot to this charmer.) Brother Saint-Hermine with thirty adorers, because he was indifferent to women; while Brother Boulanger, as good a man, had sighed three months in vain for *Rose Lambelin*, who had nothing in her favour but youth and a good figure.

"But to speak from my own experience," he added. "If I had not run after the Guignères as I did, I should have had one or other of them. But

I showed too much eagerness and they played a trick on me. I shall not make that mistake again; for my adventure has had one good result. Mlle Bourgoin (I tell you this in confidence) was thoroughly frightened at the danger into which her harshness drove me. I went to her for help before coming to you, and she generously left the house ahead of me to secure the key, at the risk of her reputation. But your kindness saved us from this unpleasantness – and much more! You were an angel of salvation. . . . And I have profited by my imprudence to obtain exquisite delights. Mlle Bourgoin is jealous, and in a young and pretty girl jealousy means pleasure. She lies in wait to see me pass, and if I look up she is in heaven; I am always welcomed with delight; and all this because I showed that I had no taste for the part of the lover languishing in sackcloth and ashes. . . . And as for you, I tell you, very much in private, that you are happier than you think." (Did he say this to make me bolder, or did he really know? I have never been certain.) "I have discovered from some remarks Manon Bourgoin let fall that Mme Parangon is not indifferent to you; and that she often avoids you in spite of her pleasure in your conversation. . . . My friend! she is better than a maid. There is no fear of consequences! Venture, when the opportunity comes; venture, I repeat, and confidently. . . . Perhaps, at the bottom of her heart, she is vexed that you are so bashful; even the best of women likes at least to take a pride in her fall. Have you any right to take the nobler part for yourself, and deny a fair lady the credit of resisting you? That is not generous! it is not even polite! Court a rebuff, and at least you will show that you feel and are alive. A woman always either glories in her resistance, or is content to fall. Give her one of these pleasures, or both at the same time! It is cruel, inhuman, to refuse everything to a woman so worthy to have all gifts lavished upon her. As for the girls, I do not think the pretty Baron is a vestal and, as you must try some one, I should begin to feel your way with her; if others have been before you, are you going to make a fool of yourself by setting up as a goddess for your veneration a girl who is a fair butt for the ribaldry of any contemptible puppy? . . . Little Prudhot is another matter: she is a good girl. So no liberties with her! Marry her by all means if, as I understand, it would be a good match; but you are really too young to marry; who knows to what you may not aspire? If my appeal is refused and I have to stay monk, I should be delighted to have you unmarried and would do everything for you. But if I get my freedom, then you shall marry without waiting for Fanchette, and we will go into business together – paper manufacture or something else. I suggest that from now on, we throw in our lots together. I have a sufficient allowance from my sister, which is well insured to me; I run no risk of losing it even by breaking my vows, for I am doing this on her advice. She is an excellent woman, and I was sacrificed to her in spite of herself. Does that surprise you? But you will understand when I tell you the reason.

"It is indeed astonishing that an only son should be condemned to celibacy to enrich his sister; but the circumstances were peculiar. My supposed father, M. Gaudet d'Arras, had a very pretty wife, my mother, who had loved and been beloved by his younger brother. The elder saw her, fell in love with her, and, although he knew of his brother's attachment, asked for her hand in marriage, and was given the preference by her parents because of his fortune. So my mother was dragged to the altar, and, in spite of the declaration made to her father in the presence of her intended that she was pregnant by Gaudet d'Arras the younger, the marriage was celebrated. Both parents and future husband regarded her confession as a trick planned by the two young lovers. My mother, bathed in tears, fainted at the foot of the altar, and never pronounced the *Yes* of the marriage service. Five months later I was born. My supposed father was furious that I appeared so early, but he had nothing to complain of: he had been warned. As he adored my mother, in spite of the loathing she manifested towards him, he wanted to avenge himself only on his brother. He contrived to be given an order sending him to the Islands,* and hoped that he would perish there. But the very opposite happened; my father (whom I call uncle to the world) made a considerable fortune, and returned a month ago with his wealth. But I am taking things out of order, and must go back to my birth.

"When I came into the world, my legal father regarded me as a monster and my mother as a treasure beyond price. She wanted to nurse me herself but the tyrant would not allow it. He put me out to nurse, keeping the matter secret from everyone, with the idea of getting rid of me some day. . . . This plan was never carried out, because other schemes seemed equally satisfactory without exposing him to the dangers of the law. I flourished amazingly, to the great disgust of my so-called father! . . . In the following year my mother, wishing to soften his heart towards me, relented and presented him with a daughter. That is my sister. M. Gaudet d'Arras adored this child, and my mother loved her no less than she loved me: she brought her up to the age of twelve years, and then died.

"No sooner were her eyes closed than I was sent as a novice to the Cordeliers at Troyes, with a recommendation to the Fathers to foster a vocation in me. At sixteen I took my vows, and, at the same instant, two attorneys, sent by my sister at my request, witnessed my appeal against them. It was the Warden here, then my director, who hid them in the sacristy. My vows, therefore, were nul. But knowing with whom I had to do, I held my tongue and would make no scandal; my birth had already caused enough of that. I have been nine years with the Cordeliers, at Troyes and here. . . . When I reached twenty-five, my 'father' tried to force me to take Orders and found people to second him. Then I lost all hope. Indeed it mattered little to me whether I was a monk or a secular priest, seeing that either way I could not marry and perpetuate my name. In this unhappy position my sister, who had been married more than five years and had a son and a daughter, my generous sister came with her husband and saw me secretly. She asked me for a written and signed statement, to show to the Bishop of Troyes, expressing my earnest desire not to be ordained. I did as she asked, and she took my declaration to the bishop herself, who, after examining me, pronounced a reprieve; and this was renewed at the following ordination. My 'father' fumed, but in the end he died three days before the third ordination.

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*The reference probably is to the colonies in the French islands of Bourbon (now Réunion) and Île de France (now Mauritius and British). [Ed.]

"After his death my sister, who loved me tenderly because a dear mother had commended me to her kind heart, arranged an allowance for me, so liberal that I begged her to make it less; but she divided her income equally, and made me take half. Thus I have been able to save in secret, and have a considerable sum with which to start a business. Your name would be used to begin with, and later you would be my partner. That is not all; my real father is also working to get my vows annulled, after which he will make me his sole heir. Your name will be of service here also, and save us from pettifogging lawyers. You will be very useful to me; I have taken your measure and you are a man I can rely on, a treasure from my point of view. There are two men at the moment for whom I have an unreserved respect: formerly there was only one, the Warden; but he is at the end of his career whereas you are just beginning yours. Let us be one in heart and soul, with the same opinions, the same philosophy, the same ideas on all those things which bind man to man. . . . My cousin Gaudet is a good fellow; but there is too big a difference between you two for me to admit him as a third in our partnership."

Such was Gaudet d'Arras's grand exposition of his ideas. He enlarged my own, I saw wealth ahead of me, and the thought of my family's delight led me joyfully to embrace plans which would otherwise have given me little pleasure. I say this because it is the truth; it was the virtue that still remained to me which led me astray. I talked with d'Arras in deference to Mme Parangon's wishes; I accepted his offer of an alliance through filial love and my attachment to excellent parents. . . . Weak mortals! Playthings of Destiny! Vaunt your chance virtue after this!* . . . D'Arras had associated his views on women with the prospect of worldly success. I was tempted to follow his advice, but not through conviction: it was my passions and the vehemence of my emotions which drove me in search of the pleasures of love.

Thus my mind began to range more freely; desire and the fulfilment of desire took the place of the tender affection which had hitherto ruled in my heart. Madame Parangon possessed that charming attribute which I have never been able to resist, a pretty foot, and it was not one that excited the loftier emotions. Add to this that in her it was more bewitching than in any of the women who had so far attracted me; her shoes, made in Paris

*Let us avoid sophistry, which I detest; without such virtue as I still possessed I should have come to grief sooner. Virtue did not save me; and it was neither filial respect nor gratitude to Mme Parangon that caused my downfall. *Note added the 12th of June, 1784.*

and chosen with all the taste of which a pretty woman has the secret, were instinct with that voluptuous elegance which seems to give them a life and soul of their own. Sometimes she wore shoes of white cloth, plain or embroidered with flowers in silver; sometimes rose-coloured ones with green heels, or green with rose heels. Her supple foot accentuated, instead of deforming, the graceful lines of a shoe, and made it more provocative. . . . After Gaudet's exposition, for which I found support in La Fontaine, Grécourt, Vergier and Boccaccio, I was eagerly on the alert for a glimpse of anything that could excite those desires which before I had repressed, because, like my friend the elder Deschamps, cousin of the Barons, I had wished to remain faithful to her who would one day be my companion. But my association with d'Arras and Gaudet of Varzy changed my whole attitude. The latter, vigorous but limited, found an outlet for his surplus energy in a flow of licentious talk, too coarse to arouse anything but distaste, yet troubling to the senses. The other, a discontented monk, outrivalled the man of the world in freedom of word and deed, for fear he should be thought a bigot; and liberty degenerated into license. As for Deschamps, I never saw him except on Sundays and holidays, when we met in the mornings solely to read Latin and French poets together to improve our taste. He was a man of upright life (he is now notary in his own town) and never met my acquaintances of looser morals, nor did we confide in each other. I was a totally different person with him and, if he ever comes to read my story, it will greatly astonish him.

To hasten the catastrophe, which I cannot even now think of without a shudder, Gaudet of Varzy, who looked upon me as a sort of god, thought it not indiscreet to tell me that, one Sunday morning, his attorney's beautiful wife, the fair Jacquette, had asked him to lace her, as her husband and the maid were both out. As the corsets tightened about her slender waist, a bosom white as alabaster rose and overflowed them, and, maddened by lust for the charms his eyes devoured and his hands were almost touching, he came near to overturning her, crying out: "I must die or have you!" He was certain that he would have yielded to this impulse, the mere thought of which made him tremble, had not the chambermaid returned at that moment. "It was then a quarter to nine," he continued, "Madame Minon put on her dress and Marie put on her shoes, and she went out to Mass. Marie, who was following her there, went up to her room on the second floor to get ready. I went after her, my senses reeling; spied on her and, seizing a moment when she was half-undressed, threw myself upon her in a frenzy of desire. She struggled. . . . 'I will stab you first and myself afterwards!' I exclaimed. 'Yield!' 'You will ruin me!' 'Never fear!' 'Will you marry me?' 'Zounds, I'll marry you!' The girl still struggled, but I *married* her; the strength of madness was too much for her. She gave in; and I kept her more than an hour: I was insatiable. I only let her go when I heard a knock on the street door, which I had shut before going upstairs. It was the maid from a neighbouring house who wanted Marie: you know her, a fat good-natured girl, always laughing, always blooming, and as fair skinned as her young mistress Annette Bourdeaux. She often makes fun of me (I deserve it: I know there is something clumsy about my walk and appearance): 'Were you asleep upstairs?' she asked. 'Yes, I was devoured by gnats all night and never closed an eye!' 'Poor fellow! He is so good that those gnats must be damned already!' 'I hope so! . . . And as Marie was in her room, I thought she would come down.' 'In her room?' 'Yes.' 'Where?' 'This way.' And I pushed her into the study. She went in still laughing at me. When we were at the far end of the room and near a sofa on which M. Minon seats his lady visitors, it was easy enough to trip her up, as the curtains were drawn and it was almost dark. I held her so tight that she was conquered before she well knew she was attacked. Marie had left without hearing us and shut and locked the door; so, as she could not get out, Nannette had to stay. She was melted by a promise of marriage when I came of age, and yielded willingly. . . . So that was two! If I had known before what I know now, they would have danced to my piping long ago! If you could see how attentive they are, and how amenable! . . . But it needed Madame Attorney to send me out of my senses. . . . Ah, if she would only ask me to lace her again!"

I remembered that I had looked for Gaudet that morning after leaving Deschamps and, not finding him, had allowed a notorious rake to enter into conversation with me. He was the son of Buisson the attorney, and assaulted virgins more shamelessly than anyone I have ever met. I look back with a sort of terror, and wonder that I did not fall into the most abominable debauchery at this time, considering the acquaintances I picked up one after another, without any effort on my part. It was Mme Parangon and Madelon who saved me: the one by her virtue, the other by giving me pleasures sweeter than those of vice. The good opinion of the Prudhots helped too, as also did something fairy-like about an adventure I had with some school girls. . . .

Buisson (who died later as a naval lieutenant) had spoken to me two or three times in passing, when he had met me with Gaudet d'Arras or Deschamps, his neighbour. Now, seeing me alone, he joined me. "Would you like to hear a song I composed last night, Nicolas?" he asked. "I have just sent our Dirty Dick with it to Mlle Émilie Laloge, Mme Hardouin's pretty boarder." I gave him my attention without replying, and he sang the most infamous verse I have ever heard in my life.* "You can't have sent such a song to a girl as modest, pretty and refined as Émilie?" I exclaimed. "I have, and she will scream with laughter over it. . . . And what about you, and those verses you wrote to Joséphine Paintendre comparing her to Macareus – I really don't know why, because she never had a child by her brother as far as I know?" (I did not mention these verses, written for Breugnot and on information supplied by him, because they have nothing to do with my story, except that they caused me some unpleasantness six months after.) "My verses were perfectly decent; and I did not compare her to the Macareus in the Fable, who was a man and the brother of Canace, but to the Macaria in the little Greek story of *Mysis and Glaucus*, who is a woman. Also they were given her by the brother of one of her friends and neighbours." "That does not affect my song; you see, it will be well received. If you will come with me to High Mass, I will speak to her when she comes behind the Choir to collect for Saint Agnes; and while we are waiting we might read your verses to Joséphine, if you still have them." I went to the church with him. All the dissolute young men gathered in two or three chapels behind the high Romanesque altar, where they were hidden from the rest of the church. *Pierrefitte* was there, who afterwards became a musketeer; his elder brother, *Borne*, the public prosecutor, and his younger brother, *Desfourneaux*, and their cousin *D'Ouenne*; the three *Deschamps*: the eldest, *Caillotte* and *Couly*; the brothers

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*Vague statements which mean nothing should be avoided where possible, so I will give Boisson's song in code.

*Y45s m'v45t2z j2 l's2ns bz2n,*
*C'n'2st p1s d5 y2nt q53 m'ch1t453ll2:*
*Y45s m'v45t2z, j2 l's2ns b32n,*
*P45ss2z v4rt c1 v13t d5 b32n.*

Stupidity competes with coarseness in these lines.

*Figeac*; the two *Houssets*, the son of the councillor and the son of the doctor; *Buisson's* younger brother; young *Colombat*, Annette Bourdeaux's intended; *Pollet* of Sens, and *Burat* of Donzy, who was studying under M. Bourgoin the surgeon; with all the clerks, counter-jumpers, and other young men of the town.

As soon as we were seated, Buisson began worrying me for my verses; so I produced my *Primus Codex* and read:

TO MADEMOISELLE PAINTENDRE, TO BE ENCLOSED WITH A PROSE LETTER SIGNED BY BREUGNOT

> *In the days when superstition was rampant – and that is a name by which religion might well be called – there existed at Delphi, a notorious temple where ancient Apollo deceived our ancestors by means of the fierce transports of his Pythoness and unveiled a factitious future before their eyes.*
>
> *It was a Greek custom for every lover to take his mistress thither and, offering up tresses of her hair, to receive from the God and at the hands of his priestess, a blessing on the betrothal and a happy augury for the delightful wedding which awaited them on their return.*
>
> *The two most charming among the host of Lovers led thither by Love were the tender-hearted Mysis and Glaucus. These had often been led astray by their ardent passions and seemed, as they mingled their bodies, through very excess of fire to fuse their souls as well.*
>
> *But swiftly the fair young Macaria, the adorned of Cypris and the Graces, followed after Glaucus. Alas, though she is loved by a faithful and credulous adorer, there is no vow with which she has not abused his wasting heart.*

The rest of the poem describes how Macaria, poor and with an eye to the main chance (it was this that annoyed Joséphine), pretended to return the love of a rich man through ambition, and sacrificed the young shepherd she really loved:

> *The lot of these two miserable rivals differs only in this, that one is unaware of his misfortune and that truth has enlightened the other.*

Stifling her remorse, Macaria pursues her triumphant way. . . . She passed Lysander, dying of love and jealousy by the road side, without perceiving him, and lied about her love before the Gods. Outraged Apollo pronounced a dreadful oracle, yet Macaria thought to defy him; but, on her way back, he made her see Lysander stretched beneath a cypress, and, at the same moment, Love wounded her with his arrow; she ran to her lover and gave up all for him, yet could not save his life. He died in her arms.

Buisson was delighted with my verses; he said that, though old-fashioned in form, they meant something. "She might well have been annoyed," he added, "for that is exactly what happened with Carouge, her Lysander, through whom she missed a rich husband. . . ." Then Mlle Laloge appeared with the plate, and Buisson pointed her out with a snigger. I was dazzled by the young nymph's charms; she was slim and delicately made as a Parisian, but she had roses in her cheeks and these, melting into a snow-white skin (for she was very fair), made her shine like the queen of flowers. Buisson smiled at her when she came up to us. . . . (Note that he had had the impudence to sign his song.) She flushed with anger and turned disdainfully away, passing the plate quickly in front of him to come to me. I gave her two sous and she wanted to give me change, as it was the custom only to give two liards. "No," I whispered, "I am one of the most ardent worshippers of Sainte-Agnès." "And I of her charming collector!" added Buisson, throwing a coin into the plate. She neither looked at him nor offered him change, although he had given twelve sous on purpose to detain her, with the result that Buisson had to put up with a good deal of broad chaffing while the girl was collecting from the other young reprobates, all of whom gave something as was their custom when the collector was good-looking. Indeed the prettiest and best-dressed girls were always made to collect, although the indecent jokes they had to put up with from the young men behind the choir were common knowledge. "You haven't caught on," I said to Buisson. "On the contrary, what else could she have done? . . . And she kept all my money; surely that must be a good sign? By the way, would you like to join a party I am getting up for this evening?" "With whom?" "With *Camos*, the daughter of the cooper, next door to our fowl-run. . . . I shall have her to-night, it is all arranged. As I have not got a key for the yard gate I am going to take up the pavement and pull her underneath it. . . . If you would like to come too, you have only to say so." I declined; my senses urged me to join this cynical entertainment, but reason prevailed. I refused to talk any more and went and sat in a corner by myself.

It was on coming out after Mass that I met Gaudet and he related his adventure with the two chambermaids. Lost in thought, I listened without comment, disturbed by what I saw and by what I heard. It was not the despatch of two chambermaids that made the most dangerous impression, but his artless picture of Madame Minon, in corset, petticoat and dainty shoes, with her full round bosom. This caused an extreme perturbation, which led me to fall that day into the same aberration as had been brought about by Marguerite: and one much to be feared, for it is such solitary malpractice that leads the young most quickly to their own destruction. As Martial says:

*Faciunt, præcipitantque virum.*

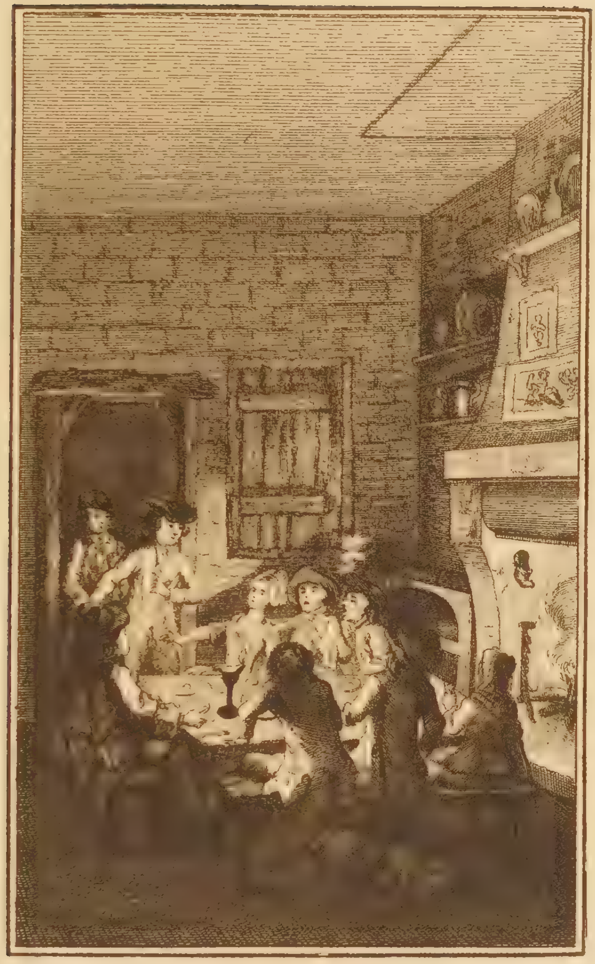
On returning home to work, I saw Madame Parangon elegantly dressed; her tongued shoes were rose-coloured with a green border and green heels, and fastened with a pretty paste ornament. Either, being new, they were not quite comfortable, or else perhaps she wanted to save them after having worn them at High Mass, where she had distributed the consecrated bread; at any rate she changed them for equally seductive green slippers trimmed with pink and with pink heels. I stood devouring her with my eyes. Toinette put her mistress's shoes on a little table by the door and the two went up to the first floor, telling me to wait till they came down again. Distracted by the fiercest passion, my worship of Colette, I seemed to see and touch her as I fingered the shoes she had discarded. I pressed my lips to one of these jewels, while the other, in my excessive exaltation, betrayed nature and its own sacred purpose, and played a woman's part. . . . I cannot speak more plainly. . . . Her warmth still lay about the lifeless object she had touched . . . a mist covered my eyes.

My passion calmed, I took one of the shoes that had excited this perverted outburst and wrote *I adore you* in small letters upon it; and then replaced the pretty toys where I had found them.

In spite of my quick ears, I did not notice that some one came into the room in the midst of my abandonment, and stood almost beside me. The innocent Toinette had seen me, but not understanding in the least what I was doing, had gone up again quietly to tell her mistress. Madame Parangon came down in surprise, but happily only at the moment when I was writing the inscription. A slight noise made me retreat to the courtyard and, while I was away, they must have read what I had written, for I caught a glimpse of Toinette's skirt as I came in again and the shoes had plainly been moved. Dare I say that this wild extravagant possession seemed to smooth the road leading to Colette herself? I became reserved, taciturn, and unsocial; I was savage with lust. And all my madness was concentrated on one object – Colette, *ad huc virgo a nullo tacta viro.* I kissed with passionate rapture everything she had touched, and my desires only grew more flagrant. One day in particular, finding myself in the place where she used modestly to put away her soiled linen, I seized greedily upon all that had been in contact with her charms. I pressed a mouth, distorted by lust, against her tucker, against . . . what I conceived to be the *vela secretiora penetralium* . . . in a transport which cannot be described. If, during one of these fits of madness I had found her alone, I should have used violence. . . . May this account of my experiences be useful to others! If I, virtuous as I still was, had read a book such as this one, it would have given me a salutary lesson! I should have repressed my headlong impulses by means of reflection, and escaped my peril by avoiding the very things to which, in my inexperience, I was drawn as a moth to the lamp which will destroy it.

When the violence of my emotions had somewhat subsided, I determined to reveal my passion to Colette and to adjure her in the most affecting manner to show me how I could overcome it, or else to grant some measure of indulgence. But I built little on the latter alternative, since one glance of hers filled me with a shy reverence. . . . But where was I, Reader? . . . I wander often from my story, carried away in spite of myself; *abyssus abyssum invocat.* . . . Madame Parangon came down again with Toinette; and, as ashamed as though my secret had been guessed, I rose to go upstairs and work. As I opened the glazed door I caught sight of Colette re-reading my inscription. . . . I shuddered, and fled. . . .

But seated at my little desk, I fell to thinking of Colette instead of working, and out of reach of her eyes, I grew bolder and congratulated myself that she had seen my words, *I adore you.* . . . "At least she knows it now,"



I thought. But when the bell rang for dinner all my fears returned, and I went down like a criminal to face his judge.

Mme Parangon and I were alone for dinner: M. Parangon and the foreman, both free-masons, were at a lodge meeting in the country, and Manon Bourgoin took advantage of the absence of her father, the Master, to dine, etc., alone with Gaudet d'Arras, with the knowledge of her mother. . . . I stood with lowered eyes. Madame Parangon told me to sit down, and there was a sympathetic inflection in her voice that still rings in my ears. She was already in her place and I sat at the side of the table. "There are only two of us," she said, "so sit opposite to me." She helped me. I ate in silence, and she said nothing. My state of mind was difficult to analyse. At times I almost regretted my daring, at others was well content with it. . . . At last Mme Parangon said: "You are dreaming?" "Yes, Madame, I was dreaming." "Eat; you are at table now." I replied: "Yes, Madame," without knowing what I said. "Were you at High Mass?" "Yes, Madame." "Did you receive the consecrated bread?" "It is not distributed behind the Choir." "I did not know that. . . . See, there is a piece for you." She pointed to a silver plate; but she had to hand it to me herself. "You are absorbed in your thoughts to-night?" "Yes, Madame." I wrapped the bread in a piece of paper. "Do you want to give it away?" "Give it away! Heaven preserve me!" "Then what are you going to do with it?" "Keep it, Madame, as the gifts of those . . . we greatly reverence . . . should be kept." She smiled and blushed, saying: "Not that kind of thing." Ah, but I was tempted to cry aloud what I had written, *I adore you!* and then find vent for my delirium upon the Ile d'Amour, whither I sometimes went on Sundays, to write verses or read the novels of Villedieu, or discuss literature with the elder Deschamps.

Ever since I had adored Colette I had meant to go to this happy Island after the long meditated and difficult formal declaration of my love, and there give rein to my joyful rapture. For places where I have rejoiced or grieved are for ever holy to me; they grow dear to me, and are as temples for something divine. I feel pleasure more vividly than most men during the swift moment of its passing; but that moment is by no means always the most delightful: the rapture of it blinds me; whereas alone, after it has passed, I live it over in imagination and savour it. Thus pain itself, once over, becomes a source of rich emotion: as the same day returns each week, each month, each year, I congratulate myself on some danger escaped, and my heart softens as I consider the betterment of my lot; or if by chance things are worse with me, I soothe my present suffering by remembering that which is past; I weep for the one and stiffen myself to meet the other.

(Later I found a third private pleasure, which I only experienced with my friend Loiseau: it lay in savouring an experience a second time, and this more exquisitely than at first, by describing it to him and watching him share it. It consoles me now for certain faults to think that my heart can never have been entirely depraved, because it was always open to friendship.) But to return.

At the very moment when I was tempted to say, *I adore you!* I remembered that it was Colette's birthday, the 22nd of October, and I wanted to offer her my good wishes. How I longed for a fine nosegay to give her! But I had nothing, not even my heart, for that was hers already. As we rose from table I opened my mouth, with a beating heart, and said aloud to myself: "To-day Nature's masterpiece first saw the light!" and looked at Madame Parangon, who was getting ready to go to Vespers. I was dumb, but I shook all over. "Something is troubling you?" she asked. "I . . . know, Madame, that to-day is your birthday; it is your festival, and the festival of Sainte-Colette. . . ." "Yes, you are right. I was born at two o'clock in the afternoon, and at that hour I shall be in Church to thank God for this twenty-third anniversary of my life." "And I also, Madame." "It is not your birthday too?" "No, yours." "Thank you!" "If only I had some flowers!" She smiled: "The wish is enough." "Madame . . . if I were a god, I would give you the star men call the fairest; every time I look up at Venus, I shall think: 'That is Mademoiselle Colette's beautiful star'." She blushed. "A pretty compliment, Monsieur Nicolas!" She went out well pleased with me.

The vehemence of my passion for Colette inevitably cooled my feelings for Manon Prudhot and the elder Mlle Baron. The former had recovered; but she had lost half of her good looks, and her disposition suffered by it; she was less gentle to me, and became jealous and exacting; she was particularly vexed that I had not already given up printing. I stopped visiting her; which would be surprising after what I have said about the special charm of this intimacy, if I had not prepared the way by repeating Mme Parangon's words to me concerning Fanchette. . . . As for Mlle Madelon Baron, she took my indifference without ill feeling. When she looked at me she smiled, and I would blush as though she knew my weakness. I could almost hear her saying: "There goes the fond lover of Madame Parangon's s . . . and s . . . These worthy objects have captured his noble heart!" I would blush with shame: but one glimpse of Colette and I was again thrall to my madness and the vagaries of my passion.

Yet I struggled at times against my love, and might even perhaps have conquered, owing to something that befell me, had I never met Gaudet d'Arras. One Sunday, tormented by the desires excited by Madame

Parangon and suffering a torture I did not want yet could not get rid of; and more wearied by perplexity and my uncertainty as to ways and means than by the bodily languor engendered by desire, I decided, although I was alone in the house, to go out. I locked the door, as I was allowed to do, and left the key with the Mlles *Cuisin*, two old maids whose shop was always open because they sold salt. Driven by physical discomfort and indecision, I walked mechanically towards the *Rempart des Bénédictins*. This part of the town wall backs on the little street of Saint-Germain. The path which leads on to the ramparts runs between two quickset hedges; one enclosing the garden of Baras-Dalis the carpenter, the other a small vineyard and garden belonging to a vine-dresser, whose house stands by itself and looks on to the little street. I was reading as I walked and, missing the path which led to the ramparts, I came to the little house I have described. Just opposite it, I looked up and, seeing that I had come too far, was turning back when, in one of the lower rooms, I caught sight of a young girl in a crepon jacket, who looked to me as though she were beautifully formed. However, I went on towards the pathway, and, weary of reading, fell to thinking again. My position was grievous; not in itself (alas! I was happy, though I did not know it) but because of the imperious demands of my temperament, for which I could find no outlet owing to an absorbing passion. I opened my book again, to escape my thoughts. I was reading *Régnier*; I could not concentrate on anything more solid, and his satires distracted my mind. I enjoyed this by no means perfect poet, who did not discourage me as did Racine, and felt impelled to write myself. I composed some verses expressing my remorse, and describing my painful situation and my fears for my health. (This little poem is quoted in the *Drame de la Vie,* p. 1253.)

I was just writing the last line in a state of indescribable dejection, when I was recalled to life by a sweet voice singing. The air was familiar, but the words were new to me and I have never forgotten them.

*Dear memory,* etc.

(For this song, see vol. xxx of the *Contemporaines*, p. 518 in the old edition, and p. 590 in the new.)

I was so charmed by the sweet tone of the voice that I went up to the hedge and, finding a hole, hid in it. From there I answered the singer, *sotto voce*, but so as to be audible, with the words which I knew and which were more suitable for a man, as hers were more suitable to a woman:

*Cool shadows,*
*Gems of our forests,* etc.
(*Ibid.* p. 519 or 591.)

I finished the song and then listened; there was a profound silence. I left the hedge and went into the street. I had no doubt that the singer was the girl of the crepon jacket and red petticoat and ebony black hair; and I wanted to see the face of one whose voice was so melodious! [It should be mentioned here that my own voice must have sounded equally pleasing. Emotion always gives it a very agreeable singing quality, as will be seen later in connection with Zéphire . . . (Ah that name! . . . Zéphire! . . . I cannot utter it, I cannot write it without tenderness and an emotion which you, Reader, will, in due time, commend, understanding that it should indeed be strong!) . . . or when I come to speak of a distraction I found for myself in later life, when, overwhelmed by work and disappointments and troubles of every kind, I would escape into the fresh air at evening, and play like a child with little Amélie. . . .] As I was saying, I wanted to see the girl of the melodious voice. I came to the street, and to the house, which had the top half of the door open, and saw the girl of the slim body and crepon jacket leaning from a window on the garden, listening intently. A movement showed me that the object of my admiration was . . . Edmée Servigné, the young beauty of Vaux! I trembled, but dared not speak; and, withdrawing softly, returned to my hole in the hedge, and sang this new ballad with its sparkling melody.

*Nightingales, whose pleasant winging*
*Stirs the wood's echo day and night,*
*Be quiet and respect the singing*
*Of the Shepherdess, my delight:*
*Though you might so well be jealous,*
*Do not interrupt her glee;*
*Amphion's less than you, but, tell us,*
*Surely you are less than she?*

I could just see Edmée at the window as I sang. At first she made a little movement of surprise; then she covered her eyes with her hand, as though in sorrow. When I had finished she withdrew. Fearing she would catch me I left the hedge and went to sit on the rampart whence I could see what happened, but Edmée did not appear.

My whole attitude was transformed by the rediscovery of this pretty girl, and my lonely aberrations filled me with horror. Edmée seemed more attractive than ever; and I recognised in my troubled heart the same powerful emotion that Jeannette Rousseau had aroused; for Edmée had the same way of dressing. For more than two hours I circled the house at a distance, but never caught a glimpse of her. At last, towards evening, I left the quarter, a very different person from what I was when I came out! Is Love, then, a virtue, when it engenders an innocent affection? Yes, for I have constantly found it so; Love has always made me a better man when it is fixed on a worthy object and one I may legitimately love. I can truthfully say that my meeting with Edmée saved me from a crime; for I should have dared to do . . . what I did later; but less detestably as vice had then acquired some refinement in me. Edmée cooled me towards Gaudet d'Arras, towards Gaudet, towards everyone except Madame Parangon, whom she made me love more tenderly, more reverently. All the week my mind was possessed by her. Under cover of darkness I spent every evening in her street, and went home satisfied if I had caught one glimpse of her. I made plans for a happy peaceful life alone with Edmée, tranquil as that of Clisot, who had married an amiable little brunette and was content to work as a journeyman printer. . . . Such a life was full of attraction for me. But the thought of Mlle Fanchette dispersed these pleasant dreams and made them unsubstantial. (Thus always what should have made me happy has only served to torture me, and the promised good has never come!) How could I give up my hope of winning Madame Parangon's sister, a girl whom my parents would be overjoyed to welcome into the family? Or of having my own business in a neighbouring town, but nearer to Paris? For I knew that Mme Parangon was working in co-operation with her father to this end, for the sake of her sister, heir to a considerable fortune, and for mine. Unhappy me! What crime had I committed in my childhood to be condemned so young to the tortures of a Tantalus? Fortune has been within sight, within reach; I have almost touched her and been on the point of seizing her, only to feel my deprivation the more keenly, and to miss the prize which was certain! Too much good fortune has been my undoing: and a prospective good has made me lose the good within my grasp. . . . What a terrible fate was to overtake me twelve years later, in

1765! And, as I am not dead of sorrow, how is it that rage has not killed me? . . .

I have often thought since that the only way to save my innocence and keep me in good habits would have been to fix my wandering imagination and distracted mind, to let me satisfy my thirst and fill my soul with love, by bringing Fanchette, not to our house (M. Parangon was too immoral) but to board with Mme Hardouin. She was thirteen years old (that would be ten in a Parisian), tall and fair, with a brilliant complexion and fine features of the Roman caste. The tender pink flushing her white skin made her look like the young Aurora: she had a charming smile and a musical voice, divinely sweet. In a word she was ravishing, and would certainly have satisfied my heart and my mind: I can affirm that I would have loved my little sweetheart without danger to either of us; I would have striven only to strengthen her love of virtue and thereby fortified my own. But there were difficulties: I was only an apprentice; and my master did not see me in the same light as his wife, or take the same interest in me. Indeed there was not one of his men for whom, at any rate as far as appearances went, he did not show more consideration. He had given his cousin, the pretty blonde Vergnier, to Yeury; but this was for the same reason that had made him promise Tourangeot to Marie. After her marriage, little Vergnier used to pay a private weekly visit to her benefactor, and those of the servants who were in the know, like Tourangeot, laughed in their sleeves. . . . M. Parangon's habits made Colette afraid for her sister; but in any case she would hardly have felt justified in taking Fanchette away from her father, who had just lost his wife and only had this one daughter left, to put her out as a boarder. Besides, Mme Parangon could not see all that was passing in my mind, although she had divined my feelings towards herself. If she had foreseen what was to happen, I am certain, from something of which I have not yet spoken, that she would not have neglected one single precaution to prevent it; the triumphant sweetness of her character would have overcome every obstacle and, by putting her sister more often between me and herself, she would so have ordered matters that the void in my heart would have been amply and agreeably filled. . . . But nothing of this sort happened. . . . I must return to Edmée.

One evening when I was on the watch for her, without either the wish or the courage to speak to her, I met her on the promenade of the Porte-de-Paris with her sister and sister-in-law and brother. They turned off it and walked down the road which runs beside the vineyard de l'Hôpital. I followed them at a distance, for the pleasure of seeing Edmée and enjoying the sound of her voice. Catherine, who spoke shrilly, asked: "Have you heard that voice singing behind our hedge again, Edmée?" "No, sister." "Faith, I wish I had been there!" "But who was it?" asked the sister-in-law, and Edmée replied: "It wasn't the voice of a vine-dresser." "It would be some townsman who heard you singing," said her brother, "and answered with the words he knew." "That is just what I said," answered Catherine. The idea of puzzling them still more amused me; we were a couple of hundred paces from the town, and absolutely alone. I dropped lightly into the vineyard and, hidden by the tufted vines, sang the following verses:

*When Hebe served the Gods with wine*
*Her grace was less, I swear, than thine:*
*If Philis pour the pleasant cup*
*A thousand times I'll drink it up;*
    *Yet tenderness,*
  *Though so near drunkenness,*

*Comes to me without wine, and I assever*
*I love, and find*
*That my unsensuous mind*
*Engages me to love but her for ever.*

I listened a moment and watched. All three had stopped at the side of the road attentive to my song, which was a new one. I went on to the second verse:

*Near thee resistance is afraid,*
*Thine eyes put fire to all things made;*
*A secret urgency I prove*
*And in my own despite I love –*
*A tender heart*
*Hath no defensive art*
*And could not brave a fair that lurèd so,*
*Love's self would be*
*Constrained to worship thee*
*If on Love's self thou deign'dst to use thy bow.*

Their surprise increased, and was not unmixed with pleasure. I continued:

*When Zephyr unto Flora fell*
*And tenderly deranged her veil,*
*The Goddess only shone more fair,*
*Laughing, unvexed, and debonair;*
*Ah, hand of snow,*
*Hand that I cherish so,*
*Hand ever coldly raised against my flame,*
*Sure delicate*
*Nature did not create*
*So fair a hand to spoil so fair a game.*

*'Tis done, and I see Philis weep,*
*For love has taken coldness' keep;*

*And I shall love but her for aye*
*Or, changing, lose the light of day:*
*How fair she is!*
*To wipe away Beauty's*
*Weeping when she has wept because of you,*
*Whate'er the cost,*
*Is past belief the most*
*Sweet of all sweet things that a man can do.*

"It is his voice! It is his voice!" they said, when I had finished. I did not know then whom they meant, but thought they were referring to the stranger of the Sunday before, who had sung from the hedge, hidden by the leaves which had not yet fallen. I would have been ashamed to let myself be seen after my song; so I retreated under cover of a vine, and did not climb up to the road until I was near the town; then, wanting to see Edmée once more, I turned back again along the road. However, I could hear nothing, and concluded that they had taken the path to Maladière. It was getting late, so I returned home.

No one had come in; so I sat down in the parlour pen in hand, with my mind still full of Edmée, and took my first *Codex* out of my pocket, and in it wrote the first love poem composed on my own behalf which I have kept. This is the second version.

*I wandered dreaming of you, but with no flattering hope that Love would lead my steps so near to Edmée. What, were you only there so late, sweet vagabond, the better to cheat that amorous flame your charms had lighted in my burning breast? Or did you choose that shadowy hour to punish my doubtful conduct by stealing your beauty from my eyes? But no, no! For while I burned with my unhappy flame, the ever gay and tranquil Servigné was peacefully breathing the fresh air. So, wishing to startle the silent night with such tender accents as would appease your cruelty, I sang aloud of Hebe. But my sweet*

> *theme, capricious fair one, was really that enchanting girl whose wrath I fear.*
>
> *If you would know of Hebe, the eager, joyous Hebe, she was the goddess of youth, even as you are.*

(The first version will be found in the *Drame de la Vie,* p. 1253.)

It was a delightful evening, passed pleasantly in innocent enjoyment, as has so often happened to me later in Paris. But the maxim of the poet Lucretius:

*. . . Medio de fonte leporum*
*Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis faucibus angat,*

is so true, that this first composition caused me some unpleasantness the very next morning. I had taken my verses out to revise them, just before dinner and after the foreman had already gone down, when the bell rang vigorously and, getting up in a hurry, I left my exercise-book on the desk. Degout, who had not as usual left among the first, had kept out of sight, no doubt because he had seen me writing, and hurried to my desk the moment I went downstairs. He read the absurd verses written for Breugnot and, thinking they were meant seriously, resolved to make fun of me and took away my book. I returned quickly because I was vaguely uneasy. Degout was washing his hands. I hurried to my desk, but seeing my book in his place, I seized it. There could be no doubt that he had read it; but I did not say a word, and neither did the malicious Comtois when he found the book gone. . . . He had meant to read others of my worse compositions on his return: but he could only remember this (which I have not quoted):

> *Her leg has a foot at one extremity, which well-nigh equals it in beauty; at the other, her thigh joins that which far surpasses it. . . .*

I was horrified! Happily the knave who had read my verses was also the only person capable of understanding them. That was my one consolation. Only Degout could repeat them, and only he understand them. He even had the mortification of having to listen to congratulations on my *Verses to Edmée Servigné,* which his sarcastic remarks forced me to read aloud; I altered them as I went along into the form in which they are quoted. . . . These verses, artificial and bad though they were, had a peculiar charm for me, and it was the same with the ignorant workmen, who found the returning rhymes on soft sounds pleasing to the ear. . . . I find the following three notes in the margin and at the foot of the poem:

> *1. Hi primi versus visi sunt a Degusto, opifice typographico, e Comitatu Burgundiæ. 2. This is that same charming Servigné with whom I fell in love at Vaux on the 1st of September, 1751: she lives near the rampart in the Petite-rue-Saint-Germain. 3. O tempus felix! quomodo abiisti? Ebrietas diva Juvenum, nunquam redibis! 6 Octob. 1763.*

Re-reading these verses and these notes to-day, in the same book in which I first wrote them, I am back again in the past; once more, thanks to my vivid imagination, I feel the drunkenness of youth and love, so sweet even in illusion! . . .

About this time an incident occurred which, considering my tastes and the many pretty girls within reach, is certainly curious. One dark and windy evening I saw Jeanneton, the Barons' second servant, sitting on the steps of the clock tower. Jeanneton was ugly and had a round face, but, with my mind full of her eldest mistress, I said to myself: "Jeanneton is not so bad-looking after all!" I ran into the house and left my hat in the parlour, locked the door behind me, and went up and kissed her. . . . The girl was dumbfounded (it must surely have been her first experience), and sat motionless. . . . Her charms (if charms they were) seemed fresh to me; and certainly they must have been untouched! Excited by this, and by the thought of other charms imagination pictured to me, unreflective, possessed, and made bold by darkness and by solitude . . . helped by her inexperience and the instinctive movements Nature taught her . . . I won this fine prize! When all was over the girl got up quickly, and I noticed that her figure, which was generally heavier below than above, had become *refined* during my *happiness.* I returned very much depressed. I did not feel I could face anyone, so, as soon as Bardet came in, I went to bed.

My first waking memory was of my "happiness," and my heart was like lead. I felt as if the words *He loves the Barons' scullery wench* were plain upon my forehead for everyone to read. I did not say a word all the morning and, at midday, dared not show my face at the street door. But as luck would have it, Marote sent her assistant to ask Toinette for something while we were at dinner. Jeanneton blushed when she caught sight of me, and as for me, far more ashamed than she was, my face was on fire. "By my faith, the creature must have a lover!" remarked Bourgoin. "She is quite spruce, and not so repulsive by half as when I saw her last week." Jeanneton passed through again on her way out. "Look! She positively has a waist!" he continued. Some one suggested that Marote and Toinette were developing her taste. "No one would touch her with a pair of tongs!" said M. Parangon. So much discussion on such a subject! I was surprised and thought I caught spiteful glances cast in my direction. I could not endure it, and went to the half door. Madelon was at hers, but instead of greeting me with her usual kindliness, she turned away her head. "I am lost!" I thought. "That cursed Jeanneton, as stupid as she is ugly, has blurted out everything! I shall look a nice fellow." I cursed myself heartily. At last Madelon beckoned me over. I went up to her trembling. She looked to me cold and severe, and I was more and more frightened. "Certain persons are very much attached to you," she began, "yes, beyond all expression. But this is not the day on which to tell you so. . . . All young men are alike; the exceptions only differ slightly from the general run. . . . Kindly make a note of this day: I have done you a great service, Monsieur Nicolas, a service which would astound you . . . if you should ever deserve to know of it." I was overwhelmed. I dared not raise my eyes, for I thought I knew what she meant. "Forgive me, Mademoiselle! Be gracious enough to forgive me! . . ." "I have forgiven you: I have done more . . . I . . . What am I saying? How can one guard a secret with so little self-control? Go, my young Epicurean, go! . . . But do not worry: you have friends proof against anything. . . . Ah! but do you deserve them?" And with this, she turned indoors.

There could be no doubt that Madelon knew all. I was still standing at her door when Jeanneton came out, and ran past me as though afraid of me: a compliment which deeply mortified me! Then Madame Parangon came to the door. How I longed to hide myself. She looked at me, I thought ironically, and shame drove my love into the remotest corner of my heart. I slipped quickly by her when she opened the door for me. . . . I was no more talkative in the afternoon than in the morning. No torture could have equalled what I suffered from the memory of this *pleasure,* which I would have been far from thinking such, even had Jeanneton's form been perfect and her skin of velvet; whereas her arms were rough and knobby. I remained in this condition for nearly a week. Then I began to be myself again.

My vagaries were the result of my passion for Colette combined with my erotic temperament; I snatched eagerly at anything that might distract me from the former by weakening the latter. Driven to find some outlet for my mental conflicts, the mania for verse-writing seized me again. I had but little talent, and was so careful to keep my work secret that I never had the benefit of enlightened criticism and advice. It might be said that I had to create the art of writing for myself, from my readings in verse and prose; I learnt two languages, Latin and Greek, by myself or practically by myself, and my poems were composed in accordance with ideas which I originated for myself, and which belonged to a past age; they were such as might have been evolved by a writer of Ronsard's time. These facts must be taken into consideration when reading my productions.

On the following Sunday Mlle Gauthier called at our house, the same Manon Gauthier who was taking the Mistress's place when I first arrived in the town. She was dressed with an elegance which roused my most turbulent desires, and as I had no means of satisfying them save by my pen, I hurried to my desk and recorded all the allurements of this mocking damsel. The verses were worthless, but this will give an idea of them:

> *O tall, proud beauty, enchanting my eyes with your decked loveliness; O Venus' girdle, O Gauthier, why cannot I fondle that loveliness unveiled, and, like a second Ixion, rape you from the sky? One day we shall see Love at his frolic fluttering about you, billing now here now there, dropping a kiss upon your mouth, or the exquisite half-circle of your breast; we shall see him plunge like a diver, slip like a serpent into that deep cleft which modesty keeps hidden from the profane. . . .*
>
> *Heaven, ah heaven! What is this I see? You struggle, drunken with pleasure and yielding to his blows; you are overturned upon the grass, and flutter with eyes half open and half shut between life and death. Then you come to yourself and take the rash adventurer in your bold hand and raise him to your heart. "Allay your fires, presumptuous child, and do not burn away in a*

> *foolish passion. It can last but a day in the abode you have chosen and through what you love." The winged child smiles: "I choose this for my temple, O Gauthier, and bid men see in it the immortal arbour of Love's true worship."*

I never dared to show these verses (here much abridged) to anyone but the eldest Mlle Baron.

On the following day, Monday, feeling more than ever unsettled emotionally, I thought I saw Jeannette Rousseau making some purchases in Mme Jeudy's shop, and my heart turned to her again. I was burning to go and make sure that it was she, but lacked the courage. On the contrary, I retreated precipitately, and when I returned she had gone. The first moment I had to myself, I took up my pen and began a long romance in which I described my feelings for Jeannette while at Courgis, feelings which I found still lived in my innermost heart. (I have already prepared the way for this enigma.) The title appears thus in my first note-book: *Romance* (it is addressed to Mlle Rousseau by name). Then comes a note written later: *Adoranda illa Russica prima mihi cor movit. Reputabam intus, die festo, in delubro Kurgiacæo, quæ mihi magis placeret amica. Species formaque jamjam visebantur, statura quidem, habitusque. Cum hæc in mene volvebantur, ecce ad communionem accedentem Johannam Deabus formosiorem aspicio. Amo statim, dein ardeo, sæpeque furo. Hæ Kurgisii evenere annis 1748-9-50.* The romance exhales that sensuous charm of twilight and of silence which I had learnt to know on my journeys to Saint-Cyr. I imagined that we met (a fancy possibly suggested by my encounter with Edmée) at evening on the banks of the stream bordered by M. Rousseau's poplars. The first scene shows the village at evening: the peasants returning home from the fields; the setting sun; the dying song of the birds of day and the ill-omened cries of the waking birds of night. Leaving the village before nightfall, the lover comes to the stream and sees Jeannette sitting upon its banks. He throws himself into her arms, and she responds to all his tenderness. . . . But the lovers are too innocent; they do not know how to compass the pleasures they desire. They seek and go astray and. . . . Come to themselves, they lavish fond caresses on each other and Jeannette surrenders all her body, but without success. . . . At last they fall asleep, and the lover is enlightened in a terrible dream. He sees his mistress in the arms of another who . . . plucks the rose. . . . He wakes. The uncertain moonlight shines on Jeannette's charms. He sees and admires them in silence. . . . He seeks fulfilment of his love . . . but Jeannette, half asleep, instinctively resists. He thinks she does not love him and despairs. Nature wraps herself in mourning; the cries of night-birds echo through the valleys. . . . But Jeannette wakes in tears, for she too has had a dream; she thought she was the victim of a soldier and that is why she had repulsed her lover! . . . Discovering her mistake, a sweet smile dawns upon her face. Her lover vows undying passion, and guided by their dreams, they at last devote themselves in an enlightened manner to the delights of love, and drain the cup of pleasure. . . . They fall asleep again, and it is day when they awake. Jeannette must fly: for she had only managed to escape with the help of her cousin Stallin, who pretended to be ill so that Jeannette might sit up with her in a room apart. Her lover goes with her and, when he leaves her, offers up a prayer that she may enter unseen, or at least be only thought to have gone out to taste the morning air. . . . When he is sure that she is safely returned, he vents his happiness in song, inviting Nature to rejoice with him. This poem had thirty-six stanzas, and took more than two months to finish. I worked at it in my free times, especially in the evening before going to bed and in the morning before work began.

Here are two stanzas:

> *O solitudes, where the happy lover is freed from anxiety and renews his flame, now let your sullen echoes sing my glory, repeating: Victory! after the birds. Sing, sing of my victory to all my rivals!*
>
> *Two ravished souls have flowed over you, O green meadows and trodden lawns! Your pleasant banks have seen my fair love's transports upon their shaded borders. Sing etc.*

[I will give no more of this cantilena as the rhythm is unpleasing.]

It ends with a note: *Servatum carmen ad recordationem horarum deliciosarum quæ cum juventutis tempore disparuere. Nam hodie dico: "Tum amabam Servineam; tunc Prudhotinam, aut Magdalenam Baroniam, aut Columbam, aut Ferraneam, aut Antoniam; tunc præsertim Johannam, Colettamque ardebam, et memorando sublevor." Cantilena Magd. Bar. data fuit, mense Januario 1753, et sorores invenere post suum obitum notasque quodam sero a me petiere.*

But while on the subject of my verses, I must relate certain little adventures connected with these, to set them in their proper place. I will go back to what I have omitted, and thus lead up to the 11th of March, 1753, a memorable day and a most unhappy one, and even more calamitous than I thought at the time! For if the loss I suffered on it had not happened, I should have escaped my present melancholy lot!

On the 15th of August, I wrote some lines to Mlle *Lalois*, one of Mme Hardouin's young boarders, on her first communion. (That was the origin of my short-lived but exquisite acquaintance with her friend, the charming Laloge, whom I have already mentioned.) Thérèse Lalois was about eighteen, and must have been the ninth or tenth whom M. Breugnot had thought worthy of his bed. As usual he applied to me as his "poet laureate." I began by saying that *"on such a day lovers were jealous of their Father,"* and, starting from this idea, developed and supported it with a lengthy catalogue of the girl's various charms and perfections; for young poets love such descriptions, which for them have all the charm of novelty. . . . Here is a sample:

> *Desiring to be saved at the last from the terrible abyss, to-day you leave the empty pleasures of this world and follow the divine laws of a God made flesh for our salvation. You are now to receive him for the first time. This man of holiness, this apostle of grace, bars out the impure in heart and threatens them with fire. Have no fear, Lalois, for this day you shall give love for love to God in utter purity. All his children are jealous of their Father, but you shall scorn them to remain his bride. . . .*

It was Bardet who delivered this composition *from Breugnot's sister to Mlle Lalois,* as she was leaving the church. It was read by the two friends and by a younger girl, Julie Dugravier, very tall and attractive looking. I was known to be the author, and it can hardly be imagined what a high opinion these wretched verses gave them of me. They also went to Mlle Madelon, to whom I showed all my verses.

The same day my muse produced a dozen lines to a girl belonging to the parish of Saint-Mamert, called, if I remember right, Mamertine Hérissé. She had caught my attention at the eleven o'clock mass, and I went aside to sing the praises of her attractive eyes, her flower-like skin, her coral lips, and everything else that could be seen or guessed at. Then I took a place near her, and adroitly slipped my verses into her book by pretending to mistake it for mine. She read them in the street, and I was pleased because she seemed to like them, and, by a glance, showed me that she had guessed the author.

On the 20th August Mlle Laloge called to buy a book. I was alone; and paid her a few polite compliments to which she responded modestly. I mentioned Buisson. She answered with a blush that she paid no attention to the words of a giddy young man, especially as she had been warned against him by his own sister, to whom she handed over anything Buisson wrote without opening it. . . . This brief conversation with the most seductive girl imaginable stimulated my muse. As soon as she had gone I wrote her a poem in which, after praising her character and charms, I commended Buisson to her pity. "*You could make him a model of good conduct,*" I said. "*I know he adores you, and if you could like him a little in return it would purify his heart, as mine is purified by you. . . .*" This suggestion had no result. I despatched the verses at once by Bardet, whose liking and respect I had managed to win. In fact he preferred doing things for me than for the workmen, and gave me a reputation for success with women that made Degout mightily jealous. The Comtois at this time had two mistresses, a woman of bad character called *Lebègue,* Maine Lebègue's aunt, and his pretty landlady *Saint-Paul.* . . . I never sent Bardet with messages except to girls of good reputation, who always gave him a kind reception. He was loud in his praises of the pretty *demoiselles* (to use the local expression), thus adding indirectly to my prestige. But I must confess that I owed a part of my success to him; this little Messenger of Love was own brother of the God he served.

On the 4th of September I wrote an *Elegy* to Jeannette Rousseau; in which I expressed my regrets for her in an unusual manner, since it is she who speaks and mourns our separation. (I must have begun to get a little spoilt by town morals!) [It is quoted in the *Drame de la Vie,* p. 1207.]

I finished my Elegy in the morning and, in the afternoon, on the Ile d'Amour, I began my *Epistle to Jeannette,* which I finished next day. [*Op. cit.* pp. 1207-1208.] It was in the nature of a reply to the Elegy.

Thus do the processes of Nature differ from romance. Every day my senses were stimulated by the sight of persons who could satisfy them, and whom I desired. At the same time that one who reigned supreme in my heart effaced all others by her presence; but if I was with another, the desires that she had roused pursued me there and often gave an added fervour to my infidelities. I have no doubt that Jeannette present, loved and loving, would in the beginning have eclipsed all others: but at the time that we have now reached, Colette would have outweighed her. I loved her as tenderly as I had loved Jeannette, and over and above this there was my gratitude, the interchange of ideas, and desire. If I had been given the alternative of choosing between them or loving them both, I think I should have chosen the latter. Thus, by scrupulous inspection of the recesses of my heart, I discover truth, expose it, and delve to the roots of conduct. It is with truth, the naked truth, that I would end my career; for this work will be my last, and, when you hold it in your hand, Reader, I shall be no more. But I shall live in you, by the mixing of my thoughts with yours; I shall still stir your soul and we shall exist together.

Only two days after my Epistle to Jeannette, Berdon, Madelon's sister, was inadvertently the occasion for more verses. I had come back early that evening, and saw her almost naked hunting for fleas, having forgotten to draw her curtains. I was standing at a window without a light, watching to see if Mme Parangon returned alone, when I noticed the dimpled Berdon. She was in her eighteenth year (three years younger than Madelon), and displayed all her rounded and already perfect charms to me one after the other, without a single omission. . . . But at the height of my admiration I caught sight of Mme Parangon, returning with friends who left her at the door, and my longing to talk with her was stronger than my enjoyment of an exhibition sufficiently seductive to a young man of my age. So

I hurried away to meet her. She seemed embarrassed by my appearance, and I was just going to withdraw when she told me to remain. "Here is a new book," she said (it was the *Lettres du Marquis de Roselles*) "and I would like you to read it me." I sat down at a table. The book interested me deeply, and I was reading quickly when I became aware of a strange, new, exquisite sensation. Mme Parangon had placed her foot by accident on mine. I kept my foot absolutely still to prevent discovery and enjoyed this pleasure until I stopped reading, which was not until eleven o'clock. Nobody had yet come in. Although it was the 6th of September, the day had been very hot and everyone was enjoying the air, for it was the pleasantest evening we had had. As Mme Parangon got up, she felt my foot under hers, and the fear of hurting me upset her balance; she fell forward on my knees. Drunk with love and electrified by this unexpected contact, I was not master of myself; my hands clinging to her slender waist, I looked for a moment straight into the eyes of my Divinity, as I exclaimed in a voice I scarcely recognised: "O Madame! you have not hurt yourself?" She blushed and got quickly to her feet without replying. I noticed a change in her manner with me after this: her voice was sweeter and more musical, almost tremulous; she treated me more as an equal in the things she talked about; seeming to want my opinion, and making me her confidant in matters trifling enough in themselves, but not such as women generally speak about save to those they trust. . . . Hope blossomed in my heart; if I could once arouse a tender interest in Colette, from that moment no other woman would exist for me. I felt my courage rise; I decided to speak about Fanchette, and in describing my affection for her young sister, let her see that it was founded on my tender sentiment for herself. I would thank her (for all these thoughts rushed into my head at once) for having taken the one way of saving me, confessing that I adored her in spite of myself. I would explain that though I could not kill my affection, the right to love her as a brother would enable me to change its nature and make it innocent and worthy of her. Such were my schemes, and perhaps it would have been a good thing had they been executed: Colette would then have known exactly what to expect of me. But her husband came in, and I found his presence, especially at evening, so odious, so intolerable, that I fled the moment I heard him.

My mind went back to Berdon, and I reflected that she and her sisters could be seen by others besides myself conducting their nightly hunt in the uniform of the Graces; so I generously resolved to warn them, and did so in a poem. The subject was naturally stimulating to a hot-blooded young man, still fresh to life.

*To Mlle Berdon catching Fleas (September the 6th)*

> *Yesterday, sweet Iris, I saw you hunting for the fleas that reddened your lilies and dappled your whiteness with unexpected spots and scattered their red offences on your skin. Ah, what beauties I saw at that fortunate moment! They have made me your lover in your scorn's despite. You bared your breast and seemed spellbound by the ebb and flow of Love. You did not know, young goddess, what hungry glances were devouring you!*

In the rest of the poem (too free to be here quoted) I gave Berdon an exact account of each of her movements, and of everything I had seen, that is to say, all of her from head to foot, and took the opportunity of praising each of her charms individually; and indeed they were beyond hyperbole. I had no fear of displeasure here: the importance of my warning was sufficient passport; and I was sure the matter would be kept secret as I meant to send the verses through Madelon. The piece concludes with a conception which is also the subject of an Anacreontic ode I had not then come across. But the language of passion is the same for all ages and countries and minds: my wish was to be the clothing which covered so much beauty:

> *These always look upon your secret charms and cover that distracting leg and hold a foot beyond compare close in their threads! I would fain be your shoe, and see my brief life run its little course with no regret, since it were filled with happiness and glory. . . .*

So great was Madelon's indulgence towards me that she accepted all my nonsense, even the most indecent, without a word of reproach. I need hardly add that the wish I expressed to Berdon really applied to Mme Parangon.

I made a fair copy of my detestable verses and, towards evening, went to the door to wait for Madelon; but she did not appear. Then I took my position at the same window as the evening before, to watch for Mme Parangon's return, and perhaps a little for the sake of my fair *huntress*. But this time it was Madelon, not Berdon. She opened the window, and seeing that there were no lights anywhere, took even fewer precautions than her sister. What perfection! The sight of it produced results which would have settled my future, had it not been for the malignant fate which has ever followed me and robbed me of all that promised well for me. However I forsook Madelon for the same reason that had taken me before from a no less seductive spectacle. Madame Parangon returned, and I asked if I might read her the second volume of the *Lettres du Marquis de Roselles*. Colette sat opposite me leaning back in her arm-chair; her legs were crossed so that one was a good deal raised. I read with great feeling, and she listened attentively with closed eyes. Noticing that her foot was on a level with my knees, my hand crept out and touched it lightly. . . . How can insensate matter, by contact with the one beloved, so charge and overcharge the heart with fire? I burned; I was consumed! I moved a little nearer, manœuvring to make my knees touch hers. . . . I was successful, and lost all mastery of myself; my voice dropped and failed; my utterance grew indistinct and shaky. "You are tired," said Colette, opening her eyes. "You read with too much fervour. . . . Stop there." I shut the book; but I did not move away, and as Colette's chair was against the wall, her foot still touched my leg.

"I like the *Second Part* better," she said. "The *First* made me a little sad." "The character of Léonore interests me deeply, but at present I prefer Mlle de Ferval. . . . Ah! what a difference! . . . I think that all women are interesting, and all are lovable; but some . . . are divine . . . and compel . . . our adoration!" I lowered my head . . . as a matter of fact I was just going to take Mme Parangon's hand . . . but some one came into the shop, and I got up quickly to see who it was. It was Mlle Manon Bourgoin; she had opened the half door and was saying goodbye to some one who was kissing her hand. I left them to themselves and went back to tell Mme Parangon; she got up at once. I ventured to hold her back by the dress, saying: "Madame! do not go! She is saying goodbye to some one and very tenderly; and . . . it would be indiscreet!" Colette blushed but remained. She said no more to me until Manon entered.

Manon Bourgoin thought the world of me because I was Gaudet d'Arras's friend and because of the schemes he had proposed. She spoke well of me to everyone, and especially to Mme Parangon. After the usual greetings, I left her singing my praises, and went out as though for a walk. But I was curious; so I opened the half door and then shut it again, and, creeping back, stood just behind the baize door, whence I overheard this dialogue: *Colette*: "Yes, I believe he has good points; but I cannot think that I should favour him as you suggest; he is a young man after all!" *Manon*: "Yes, but not like any I have ever met before! I wish my fool of a cousin were more like him." *Colette*: "M. Nicolas has wit and, what is better, feeling; and for that very reason any familiarity must be avoided. . . . What would people say if I invited him to our Sunday parties? No apprentice has ever been asked before." *Manon*: "You have never had one like him. . . . Do you know that, on the strength of what I have told him, my father is thinking of making him a free mason?" *Colette*: "He can do as he likes about that; but I do not think Monsieur Nicolas will accept. He is very busy and uses every spare moment during his apprenticeship to work at his books as though he were at college." *Manon*: "That boy will do something one day, I wager." *Colette*: "I hope and think so; he comes of a good stock. Our families, his and my own, are friends, and are connected by marriage. . . . Besides, if things turn out well and he goes on as he has begun, I have plans. . . ." *Manon*: "I can tell you beforehand that M. Gaudet d'Arras will be as a brother to him. He said to me one day: 'M. Nicolas did me a good turn, but it was the way in which it was done that made me like him. He did not know me: he helped me out of pure humanity, with all the fine simplicity of a generous disposition. And his action was all the more striking as he loathes monks! How much better than the sots who jeer at us, and sometimes play us tricks worthy of a *Phalaris*! . . . I shall always love Monsieur Nicolas and his friends shall be my friends, his enemies my enemies. I love goodness wherever I find it, but most of all in the young because it will last longer.'" *Colette*: "Ah! dear friend! Does M. d'Arras speak of him like that?" *Manon*: "Continually." *Colette*: "Then

I will tell you that, by my own influence, I can secure his future. He is the son of my father's friend, and I have a sister: you know her?" *Manon*: "Ah! my dear friend, I understand! That would be splendid, and I see you do him justice. . . . My cousin, dullard as he is, is never tired of praising him. . . . But, dear Parangon, if this is what you have in mind, it is right and even necessary to ask him to our parties." *Colette*: "Dear Manon, you do not think. . . . The boy is only an apprentice; he is earning nothing; he is the eighth of a large family, and his parents are not well off. One has to spend a little money at our parties, and how do you think he is going to manage it?" *Manon*: "True! I had not thought of that. . . . But couldn't one. . . ." *Colette*: "You can give up that idea! Monsieur Nicolas would never grieve me by taking money from anyone, not even from M. Gaudet d'Arras. . . . From me perhaps . . . but that would not do; and besides his natural delicacy would be wounded. . . . Leave him as he is, free, owing no man anything and unstained by any voluntary degradation. Is he not better as he is? When he becomes a journeyman he will be able to pay his share honourably with your cousin and the others." *Manon*: "He has done me some good turns with M. Gaudet d'Arras: is it not you I have to thank for that?" *Colette*: "Thank yourself, my dear. Only a minute or two ago he remarked, as he was finishing a little book: *All women are interesting to me.* You are attractive and you interest him, and he is only saying what he thinks. . . . As for M. d'Arras's proposals, I do not think that Monsieur Nicolas would embrace them with any pleasure; your betrothed is meant for far-reaching schemes and big enterprises, whereas Monsieur Nicolas prefers to limit himself and live untroubled. As master printer and married to a wife who can satisfy his heart, he will have all he wants." *Manon*: "So be it. I appreciate your arguments." *Colette*: "Oh my dear, what do I not owe to you and to your mother!" *Manon*: "My too beautiful friend!" *Colette*: "With his hateful contact?" *Manon*: "You would have died. . . ." *Colette*: "Of shame or anguish . . . three children already. . . ." *Manon*: "Supposed to be . . . yours." *Colette*: "Only my father. . . ." *Manon*: "Knows the truth." *Colette*: "I owed it to him."

Here there ensued a kind of pantomime. . . . As I could hear nothing more and was afraid of some one coming in from outside, I made as though I had just returned myself. I was dumbfounded! I now understood the full extent of Mme Parangon's goodness, and it made such an impression on me that desire was allayed, and I worshipped her in all purity. Ah! if my passions had been less strong! But I did not make myself. . . . The last interchanges in this dialogue had filled me with amazement, but I did not understand their full significance at the time.

The following day I revised my poem to Berdon, and, as no name was mentioned, I changed its destination, addressing it to her elder sister. For since excess of love had killed my desires for Mme Parangon (or so I thought) these centered all on Madelon. Thus trifling things combined to lure me, with the promise of pleasure and by devious ways, to my destruction; for all the events of my life are linked together. These verses produced an incident which would probably never have occurred without them. When I left the table at midday, long before anyone else as was my wont, I went to the door and, seeing Madelon, bowed to her, and then went up to her. "You look at me coldly, Mademoiselle," I said. "I? Nothing of the kind." "Ah! I see that some one has been telling tales against me! But judge me for yourself, if you are as fair of mind as of feature." I slipped my verses dexterously into her hand, and returned to our own door. She opened them while I was watching her, read two or three lines, threw me a friendly smile and went indoors. I ran up to the press and, from the staircase window, saw her finishing them in her room. They concluded with a short letter which I had written before dinner:

> *Even while I am congratulating myself on such good fortune, Mademoiselle, it makes me uneasy: I would not have it shared by others. Yes, I would rather risk its loss by giving you this warning than see the charms which I adore profaned by eyes unworthy of beholding them. Only jealousy could drive me thus to deprive myself of the loveliest and most seductive spectacle that nature offers: a Beauty, or rather the Goddess of Beauty, unveiled. Ah! why am I not (at night at least) the only dweller in this favoured house whence it can be enjoyed? I end with a regret, Mademoiselle, as keen as my respect for you is tender and sincere, that of us two I alone was made so happy.*
>
> *Your adorer,*
> *(Un nid, un coq, un homme las, un rets, un if).*

Such was my signature in hieroglyphics.

After working for a few minutes, I returned to the window to see if Madelon had finished reading my verses. Catching sight of me, she nodded to me merrily and most graciously. She was blushing and showed signs of agitation. I could see that my verses and letter had re-established me in her opinion. She stayed in her room all the afternoon. At the afternoon interval I showed myself at our staircase window, and she immediately began to sing. Enchanted by the sound of her voice (for it was very beautiful) I took my food up to the loft whence I could better enjoy its quality. She guessed my reason, and her tone was brilliant as she sang this song, ingeniously adding to the words until it was more than double its original length. I only heard it once, but I still remembered it in 1783 when I wrote this, and it is with me now, in Nivôse 1794 (December the 28th, 1793) as I print it.

*Oh for an undissembling heart,*
*A heart from all pretences free,*
*A heart entirely set apart*
*A partner for the heart in me!*
*If such I could but find,*
*And it were ready to surrender,*
*My heart would grow but the more tender,*
*For ever kind;*
*If such I could but find,*
*And I might be his apprehender!*
*You would not find*
*– No, no, Silvander! –*
*In the world so fair*
*A happier pair! . . .*

*Why cannot he be my attender,*
*And answer to my loving prayer!*
*Why still must he be the defender*
*My warm true love to share?*
*If such I could but find*
*(The one I have in mind)* Repeat
*And love in him engender!*
*I'd be his Heaven, I swear!*
*And make him comprehender*
*How much Timander*
*Would be the render*
*Away of care!*

I will now give the original song, to show how Madelon added to words and music in order to make her meaning clearer; and it will be seen how flattering to me were her changes.

*Oh, for an undissembling heart,*
*A heart from all pretences free,*

*A heart entirely set apart*
*A partner for the heart in me!*
*If such I could but find*
*And willing to surrender;*
*You would not find*
*– No, no, Silvander, –*
*In the world so fair,*
*You would not find . . . a happier pair!*

Her voice, her expression, her eyes, her gestures while singing, combined with the certainty that three-parts of the words were composed expressly for my benefit, inspired such intensity of feeling that this song would have changed my destiny, had that been possible. Even to-day my heart quickens to the memory of that exquisite moment and my eyes grow moist. . . . I looked into her eyes with deep emotion when she raised them to mine. . . . I tried to answer with a newly learnt Provençal song which I had been given on the 19th of September, but I could only manage the third verse:

*Tircis, he the type and sign*
*Of all shepherds that are true*
*And wise and silent and benign*
*Kept my sheep for me;*
*His breast full of violets sweet*
*To his Anièlous gave he,*
*Little friend of Marguerite,*
*Flowers and ribbons too.*

I could not sing the other four verses, my voice shook so. Madelon smiled at me and withdrew. . . . Not until the following January (the 20th) did I write my parody of the original version of Madelon's song in the form of an acrostic on the name of Saint Agnes, the patron Saint of the girls of our parish; and obtained . . . that which put an end to all irresolution.

(I had however already been made happy, with the fall of night. . . . This will become clear.)

These years of development were a time of inner turmoil. On the 9th of the previous September I had had a terrifying dream. I thought my cousin d'Aigremont, the younger of the two mentioned in the First Epoch, page 135, had been shut up in a dark cellar by her father as a punishment for having loved me. Bathed in tears she was stretching out her arms to me. When I woke I expressed the emotions excited by my fear in the following lines:

> *O terrible omens of disastrous consequence, O warnings of a dream, were you the children of remorse for that guilty lust which betrayed my lascivious mind into criminal abuses of the freedom of the game in my mad youth? Alas, I must remember those touchings with the hand by which I desecrated innocent beauty. . . . Ah, wretch, a Macareus to your Canace! Buried deep in a dungeon by your father, O Nannon, you wrote your sad fate to me. . . . He comes to me in fury, saying: Begone, presumptuous youth, and take your incestuous passion to some other place! . . .*

I tried to rescue Nannette; but I was beset by monsters, and she disappeared. In the course of the day I had read Canace's epistle to her brother Macareus out of Ovid's Heroides. As the reader knows, these two were the son and daughter of Æolus, who exposed his daughter's child by Macareus, and sent a dagger and poison to the Canace. This is not the only occasion on which I have observed that dreams have their origin in the senses (a truth proved, indeed, by the fact that dogs dream), and are merely ruminations of the blunted mind. We never reason intelligently in dreams; they are a confused and incongruous medley of perceptions acquired while we are awake, not on the preceding day, though that is possible, but perhaps over a period of twenty, thirty, or forty years, and sometimes even before the birth of reason; perceptions of which we still retain a kind of potential memory though we cannot recall them at will.

> *Stulte! quid est somnus, gelidæ nisi mortis imago?*
>
> Ovid. i, 2; *Amor.* v. 39.

A satire which I composed against Degout on the 17th of September originated as follows: several of our workmen lived in an inn looking over the tennis court, which was kept by an Italian called Anieli; a grotesque clownish sort of person, with a keen eye to his own interests, who entertained fools with extraordinary tales. Amongst others he told that, in his youth, he had been changed into an ass by his curé for not attending revelation after a monitory. He still showed the stigmata of the shoes (for he claimed to have been shod) and as they were there to be seen, it is probable that he had had sufficient fortitude to take a red-hot iron and brand himself in secret on the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet. This eccentric entertained at his inn, for choice and as a matter of personal inclination and convenience, all the humbugs and quacks, all the mountebanks, sharpers, swindlers, and tramps who passed through the town. One of his lodgers at this time had set up a bank for a gambling game which was played as follows: he had a large quarto volume in which every hundredth page was marked with a lot, while on the others was written the sum the player had to pay the banker. There was not much in it, as the ninety-nine unlucky pages together only came to double the lucky one. The players stuck a pin in the shut book, then opened it and paid the banker, or were paid by him. This novel game achieved considerable popularity in a town where there was no theatre, and no one cared for reading, and where idleness was regarded as a distinction; and the banker, who was named or nicknamed Renard, did well enough for the first few weeks. He had his wife with him, two grown-up daughters, an ape, and his brother-in-law François, who formed his troupe of mountebanks when he played in the larger towns. The ape was unquestionably the lead and the best actor of the troupe.

After the arrival of the banker and his family, Degout hardly ever put in an appearance at the press: he spent all his time with these sharpers, bringing them custom by gambling with them: he always lost, but they made it up to him afterwards. The reason for this disgraceful behaviour was that he had fallen in love with Renard's younger daughter. Certain that there was nothing of Lucretia in any of the women, he took the quickest way to get what he wanted. He flirted with Suzon, the younger, and Marthon, the elder; and even dallied with their mother to win her favour; and was ready at any moment to reach out and grasp his prize. One evening he discreetly suggested to Suzette that she should receive him in her bedroom. The girl, who saw no compliment in this proposal, pretended as a joke to agree; he was ugly and had a squint and did not attract her in the least. It never occurred to Degout that he was running any risk by taking his charmer's words seriously (surely he must have known that no woman protects herself so effectually as an unpaid drab!), so he slipped into the little closet on the staircase where Suzon slept alone. She had just gone to bed and was almost asleep when she found herself locked in the arms of a very hairy man. But that which was an added charm to the sensual Saint-Paul terrified Suzon: she thought it was the big monkey. She struggled, and uttered piercing screams. Then Degout said who he was. "It's your friend! your friend!" he whispered. "You remember you said I might come!" Suzette, more frightened of Degout than the ape, screamed louder than ever, shouting for her uncle François who slept nearest to her room. François arrived also thinking it was the monkey, from whom the elder daughter had already been rescued . . . though the mother had not been . . . altogether so fortunate. . . . Happily for Degout, he was anxious not to injure his fellow actor, because he was both valuable and an excellent comedian, so he threw over the intruder a sort of net which they used to control the dreadful animal in its fits of erotic frenzy. Having thus completely enveloped him without having seen him, François dragged Degout out of the closet on to the landing, where, as was usual on these occasions, he gave him a hundred strokes with a whip to calm his ardour. Degout roared. Apparently his voice was like the ape's, or else François did not listen. . . . By this time the whole house was aroused and everyone came upstairs: Renard, his wife, the printers, passing guests at the inn. . . . and last of all Anieli with a light. "What is it? Who? Where?" "Our cursed monkey went into Suzette's room," replied François. "If I had not woken up it would have covered her by now." Then, with the help of the light, they inspected the ape to see how it was looking, and saw . . . Degout in his shirt! The fury of Renard and his wife and François redoubled, and they would have beaten the scoundrel to death with a broom-stick, had not the host exclaimed: "One moment! one moment! Go and see if the monkey is safe! Go and see! Go and see!" "What are you talking about?" answered Renard. "Can't you see who it is?" "Who it is? Who it is? It is a man; I see that quite as well as you. But that is not to say it is not your ape. Go and see! Go and see! Perhaps you will not find it. . . . Go and see! . . . I am sorry for you if it has changed into a man. Go and see!" The grotesque solemnity of the creature, pantaloon to the life in his brief shirt, made everyone laugh. The printers, anxious to get Degout away without a disturbance, urged Renard and François to see what had happened to their ape; and, as soon as their backs were turned released Degout, who escaped to his bed bruised from head to foot. The ape was not in its kennel, and Renard, his wife and François came back frightened out of their wits. "Well, well, well!" said Anieli frigidly. "What did I tell you?" It should be explained that Lantrade, hearing Anieli say over and over again *Go and see! Go and see!* had twitched the tail of his shirt and the Italian had neatly dropped the key of the kennel into his hand. Knowing something of the way to handle it, the printer had been able to get hold of the brute and put it in its master's room, the door of which was open. As soon as Lantrade left it at liberty the ape paid a visit to Marthon, who had not come upstairs with the others; and no sooner had it touched her than she uttered a dreadful shriek, which brought Renard, his wife, François and the whole crowd flying to her help. Marthon was badly scratched before she was rescued; the net was thrown over the real monkey, and the incredulous knew not what to think. Anieli stoutly maintained that the ape had turned into a man and turned back into an ape, and appearances were on his side. To make a long story short, the ape was taken back to its kennel, the door of which was found open, and this furnished Anieli with new arguments which he urged in support, not only of the ape-man but of himself as the ass-man! Everyone returned to bed and all was quiet again.

Such was the subject of my satire. Truly excellent material! When Rütot described this veritable Night of Straparola to me next morning, he urged me to put it into verse. With so charming a subject the rhyming was soon done, but when it was finished I realised that it was hardly in good taste so cruelly to ridicule one of our own workmen, and one who had the sacred claim of priority over me, the origin and one legitimate ground of ownership. So I only read it to Rütot and took steps to prevent Degout ever hearing about it. Here are a few lines:

> *Ah, Heaven, who would have thought it? Was ever sweet seduction wedded to cruelty? Hardly was Sylvia in bed ere loving Morpheus wrapped her in sleep. She had already thrust away all that lay heavy on her, to avoid the heat. A snowy arm, a breast, a dimpled thigh, spoke to the mind through touch alone and without seeing. . . .*

That is quite enough of a production which was bad, colourless and empty of imagery, because I had neither the experience nor the practice necessary to achieve elegance and correctness and a sense for the really beautiful.

It was strange that, only the day before, I had composed another satire against, or upon, Tourangeot, ridiculing his habitual use of certain wrong words for the right ones:

> *Gentlemen, I must paint you a picture in two words of the perfect opposite of the way the Gallic language should be used. First: without deference or respect he scorns the word "grub" or the word "meal" to express what one eats or the act of eating, and proudly spits the brilliant word "livables" in your face! Second: his fertile genius makes all words alike, and he frequently pronounces "council" as "counsels"; also "suspicion" for "secret" and "patriarch" for "patrimony" seem to him excellent substitutes.*

That was the best I could do. A young Parisian with the same talent would have done far better. These were the only two things of the kind I produced.

On the 23rd of September I made an acrostic for Rütot, who sent it with one of his usual letters to the widow *Duguet*, for whom he had conceived a passion. She was called *Fanchon*, and the words were set to the air sung by Madelon.

> *Flora is goddess of the flowers; nothing equals your colouring; do not refuse my tenderness, sweet one and sun of mine. Ah, if any could enter my heart of hearts, yet none could take it captive by the beauty of her eyes; for who but you can give it happiness?*

I had the pleasure of often hearing Rütot sing this lamentable poem: the beauty of his voice disguised the harshness of the verse.

I wrote four little things in October. The last three, addressed to an *Unknown Lady* from Paris, came about in the following way. I had gone to Sacy about the time of the vintage, and an old man was there, a native of the place, called Môdîné (I have already mentioned him), who had left Sacy in disgrace, and had made his fortune in Paris. He had a great esteem for my family, as my grandfather had given him the money for his journey, and he regarded Pierre Restif as the author of his fortune. Wishing to show his gratitude, he offered to marry my father's eldest son by his second wife to a wealthy girl in his neighbourhood, and I arrived the very day that this kind offer had been made. My appearance confirmed Môdîné in his intentions, and he explained his plan at length; telling us that the girl was the only daughter of excellent people, who would be delighted to make themselves responsible for the future of a young provincial of good principles and behaviour, whose family would be a credit to them. My parents could not but be favourable to this idea, because I had not as yet said anything about Fanchette or the plans Mme Parangon had recently explained with so much kindness. I was myself tempted by the picture of this Parisian heiress; I visualised a favourable change in my circumstances, and vanity, vanity which is a factor in everything, urged that such good fortune would prove to my charmers that they had but done me justice; I took a fatuous pleasure in their imagined regrets. The prospect smiled on me the more because not one of them (except Mme Parangon, had she been unmarried) could have filled my heart completely, and I eagerly seconded M. Môdîné, who promised a quick and successful issue to his plans. My dear parents were enchanted, and overwhelmed the old man with attentions by which he was at once delighted and abashed. I put off speaking of Mlle Fanchette to another visit. . . . On my return to the town I began rhyming to my unknown mistress. I can hardly be accused of unfaithfulness in this case, as it is impossible to feel any real preference for a woman one does not know. Three things kept me in a state of discomfort: first my passionate temperament, which my principles and natural fastidiousness prevented me from satisfying on all the servants in the quarter, as did Tourangeot and Jean Lelong. . . . Second, I was cut off from the one girl who could have satisfied me as a wife, for I would still have preferred Jeannette even to Mlle Fanchette herself! But how to get at her in the face of my brothers, my parents, her parents and, I might almost add, of commonsense? For I had had no news of Marguerite Pâris, who alone could have acted for me in the matter; and I dared not write, for fear she might not be living and my letter be sent on to my brothers. Finally and most important, I suffered horribly at times from jealousy at seeing Mme Parangon in another's power. It was jealousy, Reader, more than any other emotion which made me stray hither and thither in so bewildering a way. With so many means of happiness at my command I endured the most cruel tortures, from which I sought relief *per fas et nefas* as Gaudet d'Arras said, who often noticed this. . . . My conduct would be inconceivable without these powerful motives. I had Madelon, Manon Prudhot, Edmée

Servigné, who was a second Jeannette, and the hope of winning Mlle Fanchette, and yet I behaved as if not one of them existed! First I wrote a song to my unknown mistress:

> *Are you the sweet illusion of a dream, beauty whom I love before knowing, or are you a frank expression of goodwill, born of a service rendered? Verily I see fortune changing my lot, making an end of my unhappiness and, Neptune-like, affording me calm for storm.*

There were four other verses which are not worth quoting. I followed this with some lines in which I entreated *Sophie to kindle my heart.* Then came some stanzas in which I told her that, though I had never seen her, my soul was joined to hers by a secret spell against which there was no defence. "*I know not why, but I have been filled with tenderness since I heard your name; a sweet languor has possessed my senses and subdued my heart. I see you, Sophie, tall and fair and of a dazzling whiteness; the magic of your smile reveals the pearls of the East . . . Sophie! O name of soft enchantment! my soul takes flight to you; it hovers above the street called Marguerite, wherein my Goddess dwells and walks on pearls. My soul has seen Sophie, and I call to it in vain: it will never leave her. Ah, have I seen you, fair Sophie? My soul has seen you, and I shall know you in Paris when we meet. Mingle with your companions, I shall recognise you.*" Such was the gist of these stanzas. I gave all my verses to Môdîné when he passed through the town on his way back to Paris, and he was delighted with them; especially with an *Acrostic*, the first he had seen, composed on the letters of his name. (In passing, this name expresses the original poverty of its owner, as it means *having nothing to eat.*)

> *My heart bows down before you, unknown delightful one, and opens all my enchanted senses to a flattering hope. It shows me a hundred beauties in one Sophie, and stings desire in the depths of a troubled soul. Do not forget me, O my patron, but tell her I have staked all my happiness on loving her.*

This string of platitudes seemed a masterpiece of wit to the old man. I have heard since that he gave my three poems to Sophie, who admired them; and believing in her innocence that I loved without having seen her, tried to return my love by making the old man describe me to her. So far all went well. But when Martinmas came round, Sophie attended the balls with all the other pretty girls of Paris, and a handsome partner caught her fancy and made her dance to such good purpose that despite her parents, despite even the girl herself, disillusioned by a longer acquaintance, the marriage had to be arranged. There was some talk of concealing the whole business, and keeping up with me. Both Sophie and her parents desired this; but a pious aunt made such a fuss that they were afraid of a scandal, and also that M. Môdîné would hear of the affair since it was impossible to keep it quiet. Sophie was married and the handsome dancer squandered her dowry. So the incident closed, not without some disappointment to myself; for I was in a state of ferment when I heard the issue. But why should I have felt it so keenly? I was no longer my own. Jeannette lay deep in my heart and prevented me from giving it wholly to another. Madame Parangon was mistress of my senses, and my devotion; of my taste, my vanity, my gratitude, my virtue, my integrity – of all my qualities in short, and all my passions. Sometimes she raised a tumult of impetuous desires; sometimes she filled me with respect for her virtue and I would fall into a frenzy of admiration at her perfection. Most often I struggled painfully against my amorous rage – or against the good resolution to overcome it. . . . I was drawn to Madelon by a certain resemblance to Mme Parangon, less in feature than in her way of dressing as a lady. Edmée, in unassuming modesty, shape, ways, and dress, was Jeannette in replica, and it was Jeannette I adored in her. Even Mme Parangon's beauty was like in kind to Jeannette's, and more so than Edmée's; they had the same colouring, the same smile: dressed alike they would have been taken for sisters. Colette and Edmée between them so strengthened my attachment to Jeannette that never, in all the time I loved them, did my heart cease to throb at the mere thought of her, and from time to time I still dreamt (as I still dream even now) of a happy marriage with her. In a word I loved her no less than when I had loved only her; for me she was the pattern of beauty. Neither is this as rare or as extraordinary as it may seem at first sight. How many men, if they searched their hearts as carefully as I examine mine, would find that they had never loved but one woman, although they had pursued and conquered many? That it was their fondness for the first, and her type of beauty, which made the others lovable? So let no one be surprised at what is to happen between me and Mlle Baron; my senses and a longing for marriage drove me. I still have this longing for marriage, and to-day, the 16th of Nivôse (January 6th, 1794), threatened with divorce by that infamous Agnès Lebègue, I contemplate writing to ask for the hand of Jeannette Rousseau, born on the 19th of December, 1731.

More verses were begun on the 9th of October at Sacy, during the vintage. They were prompted by a contempt, common enough among peasants who have lived in towns, for the sunburnt lasses I used to think pretty. The delicate skins of Mme Parangon, Mlle Baron, Mlle Prudhot, and even of Edmée, though herself a vine-dresser, had spoilt me for the robuster charms of the village girls, and my idea, ungallant enough, was to inform them of this change in my opinion. I had already done more than fifty lines of my *Elegy on the Beauties of Sacy,* when circumstances compelled me to sing a palinode. A rich peasant, always called *Caquet* though his real name was *Bourdillat*, had apprenticed his daughter

*Marguerite* to dressmaking at Vermenton, and her lovely eyes, her golden hair and perfect figure completely changed my attitude to Marie Fouard, Agathe Tilhien, Nannette Piôt, Reine Miné, etc., and the total eclipse of their charms. I will give a sample of the verses.

> *Have you kept nothing of your former charm, O place that I left with tears drenching my eyes? Was it only counterfeit beauty you showed me when I dwelt in you? Was that destiny, which pursues me with a thousand thousand cheats, really disguising horror as youthful beauty when my eyes, that glittered with evil passions, saw Marie Jeanne as altogether charming?*

I will stop at this blasphemy . . . dated the 9th of October. Here is the palinode, of the 26th of December:

> *Ah, but what sweet emotions has not this witching smile roused in my sensitive heart since then! At least I make no secret of my love, and every wish I frame is but to please you. . . . I am dreamy and thoughtful when I do not see you, but as soon as my eyes light on your ravishing charms, an inexpressible trouble touches my senses, and tells me that all the freshness of the Spring abides in my conqueror.*

The rest is in prose: "*Ah, Heavens! what do I see? Such beauty as brings tears of joy and emotion to my eyes. . . . Who is this young shepherdess, this budding Fair One whose airy lightness vies with the wood-nymphs? It is Pearl. Be comforted, O natal soil! . . .*" *etc.*

During November, the month of my birth, I was often in vein. I find a little piece, begun on the 1st and ended on the 3rd, in praise of Thérèse Lalois, who took the collection at Saint-Renobert turn and turn about with Émilie Laloge. Both girls came from Ouanne, four leagues from Auxerre, the village where my friend Jean Renaud died, while taking over the estate of his brother the curé. It is almost impossible to summarise this poem, which is merely a licentious *Description* – an outlet for robust passions kept in a state of constant irritation. This fermentation of the senses poisoned my heart; a raging fever will at last destroy both mind and body. However, I will quote a few lines:

> *O God, my ruler from my tenderest childhood, ever subduing me to your gentle sway, sweet son of Venus, I invoke your aid: ah, be Apollo to this singer of the Loves! Come show this discreet and constant lover the most secret altar in the temple of Cypris!*
>
> *Be yourself the painter of these alabaster breasts, sucked of my mouth, toyed of my tongue; and limn the rosebud at the gate, the brown and curly . . . , the coral. . . .* etc.*

I dare not go further. And yet I gave these outspoken verses, in which no detail was spared, to Madelon; she was the only person to see them, and she took them with a smile.

On the 5th of November I addressed another poem to Mlle Lalois coupled with Mlle Laloge, vowing to the two together an undying constancy. I despatched them by Bardet, after making a copy for Mlle Baron.

> *Laloge and Lalois both set me on fire in these felicitous moments with their ripening beauty, and I would have them united, if I could, for my heart to treat as a single mistress, dark and fair.*

Mlle Baron was amused by the idea that I had only one mistress because I only loved one blonde and one brunette.

On the same evening I began my notable poem the *Séjour des Graces,* on the lines of the one which had caused me so much trouble at Courgis. I devoted a new note-book to it, which I called my *Tertius Codex.* I had set myself no less a task than to paint a gallery of portraits, comprising without exception all the pretty girls in the town. I began with Mme

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*Restif, on this occasion, seems to have been too modest to write *Ces poils bruns et bouclés, ces lèvres de corail,* etc. [Ed.]

Hardouin's boarders, because I called her house especially the *Abode of the Graces*. Mlle *Laloge* was the heroine of the first canto; *Thérèse Lalois* of the second; *Julie Dugravier* of the third; *Philis Hollier* of the fourth; *Madelon Baron* of the fifth; *Maine Blonde* of the sixth; *Berdon Baron* of the seventh; *Annette Bourdeaux* of the eighth; Mlle *Carouge* of the ninth; *Xérine Legueux* of the tenth; dainty *Dhall* of the eleventh; and the two *Bourdillat* sisters of the twelfth. I will note what was actually done of each canto as the time comes; I shall not now go beyond the end of 1752. Also I will say nothing of twelve other cantos which I planned later, but never finished.

First comes an acrostic, the dedication of the *Séjour des Graces*.

### ACROSTIC *TO MADEMOISELLE LALOGE*

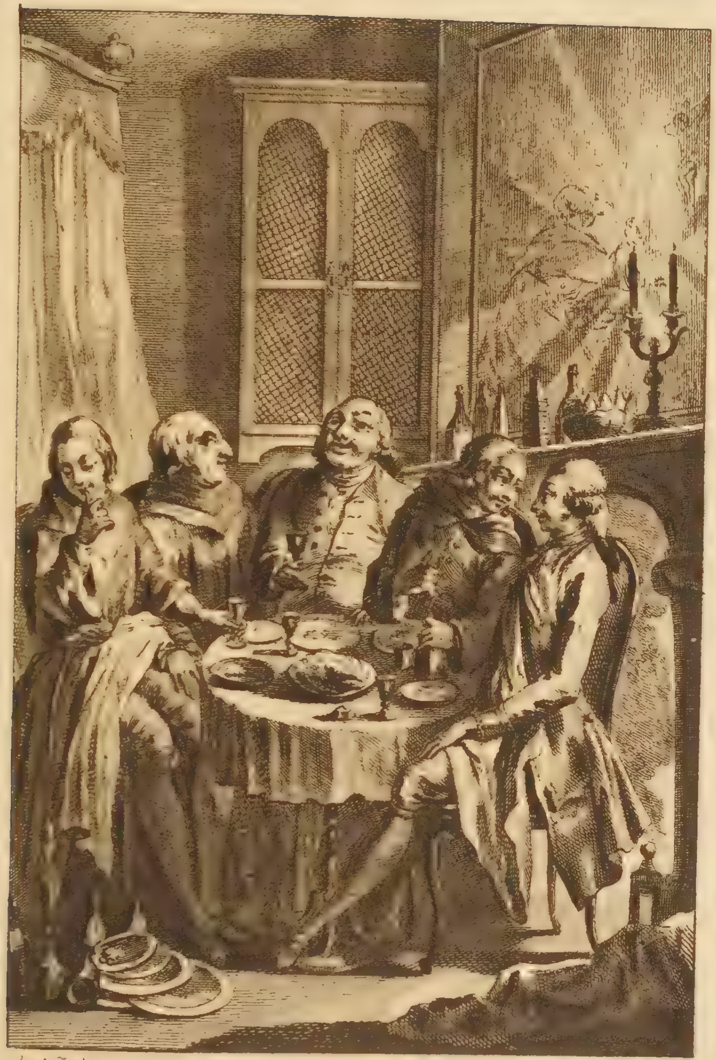
> *Love commanded, and my senses, that are ever alert to execute his sweet decrees, left every other task to build up Beauty's habitation: behold me now with his weapons for my pen. . . . It is in you, fair friend, that we find all allurement, in you who are generous and defy each risk and fear.*

The poem itself begins as follows:

> *O Palace of Beauty, lodging some twenty tender flowers with petals scarcely born, for fear the dangerous example of the worldly should poison their artless and unsullied hearts: to-day your calm enclosure is the temple and sweet sanctuary of Venus and the Graces. Help me, Love! This is the arsenal whence your sharpened darts gain their fatality. Now let your fiery heat forge me to arrows, that I may sing the graceful Laloge worthily.*

The obscenity of the poem as a whole, due to lack of taste rather than immorality, makes it for the most part unprintable. I will give the sense of the other cantos, as they occur. It was never continued after that dreadful day, the 11th of March, 1753, the memory of which, as of anything connected with Madelon Baron, brings tears to my eyes and rends me with remorse; Madelon, whom I understood too late, who was maligned by Gaudet d'Arras and painted as she appears in the *Paysan Perverti.* Gentle girl, deserving of a better fate, forgive me. . . . O forgive me! How I have wept for you, and will weep for you to my dying breath! . . . To return to the story.

After I had discovered where Edmée lived, I went to the Rempart des Bénédictins every Sunday at the hours when she left the house to attend High Mass or Vespers at Saint-Loup, her parish church. I used to watch her pass from behind the hedge, or hidden in the porch of Saint-Germain's church. I dared not accost her for many reasons. It was long since I had met her; would she recognise me? Might she not be angry at my neglect and inattention? And what had I to offer her, counting as I then was on an unknown Parisian mistress, on Mlle Fanchette, and, since that song to which she had added so agreeably, on Madelon Baron? Besides I was afraid of talk; one knows how it is in small provincial towns where there are no theatres; the people stay at home and interest themselves in the pettiest trifles. If it became known that I, who was on familiar terms with young ladies of fashion, talked and walked with a little vine-dresser, it would have been taken badly: the ladies would have scoffed at me, and felt disgraced if I accosted them. For such was the law of the old *aristocracy*; the Noble looked down on the Burgess; the Burgess on the Artisan; and the Artisan on the agricultural classes. So, though irresistibly attracted to this living image of Jeannette, I was content with the sight of her and with the exquisite emotions this provoked, and never spoke to her. Without these repeated explanations my conduct would be incomprehensible. No doubt Edmée saw me; but as she was shy and modest she did not appear to notice me. However, her sister Catherine was not so bashful; she had noticed me for some time past, and finally waited for me at a bend in the narrow road leading to the ramparts, just in front of her brother's house. She looked at me with a smile, but, as I did not speak to her, she decided to take the first step. "Surely you are the gentleman we met at Vaux?" "What, do you remember me, Mademoiselle Catherine?" "One never forgets nice people." "I am greatly flattered that you remember me." "You are fond of this district?" "Yes, it is lonely without being too far away; I come here to read and take the air." Edmée, whom I had not yet seen, was at the back of the house with her sister-in-law. "Come, little sister," Catherine called. "Here is the gentleman who was so polite to us at Vaux, when we were there with Mme Châtelain. Come and say good evening to him." Edmée appeared blushing and half hidden behind her sister-in-law, who came too; her fine black eyes were lowered and the long lashes swept her cheeks. How lovely she looked, and how happy I should have been had my heart been free! She made me a deep curtsey, and I responded by kissing her. She was trembling, and I was moved as I had never been before. With my arm about her waist I found pretty things to say to her. Catherine and her sister-in-law left us to talk; but I, overhearing the latter say to Catau: "He is just the man for her!" turned and said: "If I had anything to offer her she should be my wife to-morrow. But I am poor and have no position; what have I to give? My poverty?" At this word Edmée raised her eyes and looked at me with the most touching expression. My heart leapt; I know not how my breast contained it. I saw in Edmée every virtue joined to a tender sympathy. She said nothing; she only looked at me; but Catherine, kind, frank Catherine, clapped her hands together, exclaiming: "You shall have him, little sister, you shall have him! We have something, if he has not. All I was afraid of was that he might be rich!" I let go Edmée's hand and threw my arms round Catherine's neck; I wept, and she wept, the dear girl! Edmée did not know what to do, and looked the lovelier for her embarrassment. I turned back to her, and took her hand and kissed it. "Never shall I belong to you, or you to me!" I cried, in a sort of panic. "You were meant for happiness, but not so I!" "Why, what should stop it?" asked Catherine with an emotion unusual to her. "I will tell you then; for you merit the respect that accords with your virtues and beauty, and in saying what I am going to say you will see that I am at least honest. Ever since I caught sight of Mlle Edmée, the day she was singing *Cool Shadows*. . . ." "So it was you," cried Catherine, "I thought as much!" Edmée blushed again, and seemed pleased at this disclosure. But I went straight on: "It is for her sake that I come to this deserted quarter on Sundays and holidays. . . . And that is to admit that I am scarcely indifferent to her! But this is how I am placed. I come from a village, and am one of fourteen children; I had to give up farming and learn a trade, because my father had not enough land; the one I chose condemns me to remain a workman all my life. There is no room here for two master-printers, and if I am dismissed, or there is not much work, I shall be obliged to go elsewhere, and my wife would have to wander from town to town like a common adventuress. That is no life for Mlle Edmée. And supposing (I shudder at the thought of it!) I went from town to town without finding work, and money ran short? . . . No, no, my position is not secure enough for us to be happy together. Suppose I were to fall ill when we were far from her home? . . . Suppose I were to die? . . . Let us think no more of a marriage which would bring her unhappiness. . . . Ah, if I were only independent and secure! I would live in your quarter and be one of you; I would be a vine-dresser in my free time; and only use my education to charm our solitude with readings from the masterpieces of French literature! Another man would only have thought of himself, and loving as I love, have troubled little about anything beyond the satisfaction of his passion. My apprenticeship has still two and a half years to run; it cannot end sooner; I might have used this time to take advantage of her trustful innocence!" I stopped; and for some moments there was profound silence. Edmée had left her hand in mine; my other hand held Catherine's. The sister-in-law looked surprised; Catherine's eyes were on me, Edmée's were fixed on the ground. "What do you say to that, little sister?" asked Catherine at last. Silence. "What about you, Mademoiselle Catherine?" I asked in my turn. "Oh, I know what I would say if it were me. . . ." "Well, what?" asked her sister-in-law. "I would say it makes no difference; love is love, and strong enough! But I can only speak for myself." "Mlle Edmée feels the force of what I have just said," I answered. . . . "But if you love her and she loves you," Catherine repeated, "you will help one another to bear all life's difficulties." "No!" said Edmée at last, withdrawing her hand from mine. "No! A man alone can always extricate himself; a wife would only make him desperate." She stopped . . . I thought she was vexed. "Sweet girl," I said, taking her hand again, "I know what I am losing. . . . If you but knew how you have filled my thoughts! If you but knew why I dared not meet you again! How, after I found you, I came daily to the rampart despite myself! How I followed you on your walk that day when I sang Hebe's song! . . . No, I have not the courage to seek my happiness at the expense of yours!" "Do not say that," Edmée interrupted, "or I shall be angry! . . . No, Monsieur Nicolas, I would never take that into consideration. To show how wrong you are I will tell you what I have told my sister a hundred



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times since Vaux, and especially since I saw you again in our neighbourhood: that if you and I can be nothing to each other, no man shall ever be to me . . . what you are. I permit myself this frankness because you have been honest and sincere, and because from what I have heard of you and of your family from M. Pifou, the cooper, who comes from Vermenton, I know you would not mislead me. And so far from having any grudge against you, I shall say to myself every day: Monsieur Nicolas is an honest man. He told the truth when no one else would have done so. He is the only man who will ever command my entire respect. . . ."

You have a heart, Reader, and are acquainted with mine: judge then of my emotion! All was forgotten; Edmée alone existed! But see how fate pursues me almost as in romance! At that very moment Mme Parangon passed by; Manon Bourgoin and Manon Gauthier were with her, and a Mme Corhaux with her eldest daughter, a girl almost too beautiful to be amiable. They were talking about me. "M. d'Arras tells me that M. Nicolas often comes to read upon this rampart on Sundays," said Manon Bourgoin. "It is certainly a quiet and deserted spot." "But he might be attacked by the lizards! Look how they are running about in the sun on those old walls!" said young Corhaux. "Lizards are friendly to man," remarked her mother. "He afraid of lizards!" exclaimed Colette. "In our part of the world he catches snakes and kills them!" . . . "That is Mme Parangon!" I said to the three sisters. "I will slip through your garden and these ladies will find me reading." I went out by the back door through the hedge, and sat down at the side of the rampart on a strip of green grass by which they had to pass, and appeared lost in my book when they caught sight of me. "There he is!" said Eglé Corhaux. "Why, yes," exclaimed Manon Bourgoin. "Don't let us disturb him," said Mme Parangon, "at least not unless he sees us." "He is a well-behaved young man," said Manon Gauthier as they passed. "Did you know he was a cousin of mine? I had no idea of it when he arrived as an apprentice and asked my leave to pay a visit to his donkey in the evening! How deceptive are appearances! I thought the ass and the apprentice were brothers!" My cousin was the only person to laugh at this remark. I kept my eyes steadily lowered, but I saw and heard everything. The ladies passed on and I was supposed not to have seen them, although Manon Bourgoin came so close to me that, had I raised my eyes, I should have found myself looking up her petticoats. I ran to one of the loopholes in the parapet to watch them on the walk. The gracefulness of Mme Parangon enchanted me, while Eglé Corhaux, a Parisian by birth, seemed a picture of Fanchette: more than ever my heart kindled to these two sisters, and instead of returning to Edmée I went home.

Manon Prudhot was at her door. Since my seeming neglect of her offer to take me into her father's business we talked no more together: she had avoided me, and I had made no effort to see her. I bowed as I was going in, but she stopped me with a gesture. "You write very good verses," she said. "I saw some recently addressed to Mlle Paintendre. How did you come to know her?" "I assure you, Mademoiselle, that though the verses were by me, they were not written on my own behalf; a friend asked me to do them, and then made a copy of them; I am certain of it because he returned me the original." "I thought they were an expression of your own feelings." "No, Mademoiselle." "The girl has complained about them, and taken them to the curé as coming from you." "Then some one must have put in extra lines; but the young lady showed them to the Mlles Baron, and they have an exact copy which I gave them myself;

so they will have defended me." "Madelon Baron is always defending you; you are lucky to have her entire approval! I wish you all the happiness you could desire with her."

It was Manon Prudhot who concluded the interview; perhaps she saw in my eyes that I was impatient to be gone. I shut myself up in the press-room to work at my translation. I needed to fill my mind with another's thoughts, as my own were but a dreary entertainment. But before going further, I must tell what followed on the proud Paintendre's complaint about verses written more than six months before, of which Breugnot had just sent an altered and insulting version. Salomon, the Curé, took them next day to M. Parangon, who laughed in his face, and, after glancing at the writing, assured him that the verses were from Breugnot, then at Châtillon. My confession had been handed on to Mlle Paintendre and she had told the Curé everything, mentioning the copy given to the Baron sisters. "In that case," was M. Parangon's reply, "it is not the young lady but Phœbus Apollo who is the offended party. He has been roughly handled here and will avenge himself with a kick or two from Pegasus! I should be much better pleased, from the author's point of view, if the poem were naughtier and the verse better – for this is execrable." The pastor went away unsatisfied, and I was severely scolded for not writing better verse. I explained that I had had to make them absurd before anyone would believe they came from Breugnot. "Then they are not bad enough," M. Parangon, an excellent critic, said shrewdly. "They are merely commonplace, and platitudes do no mischief." When I went out in the evening the fair Paintendre was at the Barons' door. "Here, boy!" she called, but I went on my way without replying. On my return, Madelon said: "I should never have forgiven you if you had responded to such an insolent summons!" "Believe me, Mademoiselle, I should have done so but for my respect for your graciousness to me." "Bad boy!" said Madelon, giving me a little slap on the cheek. "By the way, what about your dear Prudhot? I expect she scolded you yesterday!" I turned back to reply, but she dismissed me with a gesture, saying: "Be off! Be off! I don't want to talk to you this evening." Why was Madelon so gracious to me? Because Mme Parangon deigned to honour me with her attention. She alone gave me my whole value; I was credited with all kinds of good qualities because she assumed I had them. Just as the kept mistresses of licentious celebrities will excite the cupidity of epicures in vice, so was I sought after by the most attractive girls because the Goddess of Beauty had cast a favourable eye upon me.

I had swallowed my discomfiture by M. Parangon quietly enough, but I determined to revenge myself on Mlle Paintendre. So on the banks of the Yonne just below Milon's rope-yard, I composed a song to the air: *Vous m'entendez bien?* in which my object was to make fun of her denunciation to the curé. It was directed against Mlle Paintendre only; Manon Prudhot was respected for the sake of our old friendship. Here are a couple of verses:

> *But what worry and bustle did it not cause me? The vicar and curate were called in . . . well . . . to find out the adventurer . . . you understand?*
>
> *But what a vexation did you not cause me, lady of tender new bread? For they say you are tender . . . well . . . even so far as to let one, let one . . . you understand?*

I will not go beyond this infamous verse, so much enjoyed by Buisson, and so contrary to my principles. I regretted it afterwards! Gaudet d'Arras revised it, and that evening I purposely dropped the copy in his writing.

It fell in front of Buisson's door, where he found it on coming home. He never went to bed at all that night; he roused some fellow ruffians, free as himself, and they promenaded the streets bellowing my song, for which Buisson, greedy of such petty triumphs, took the credit. They did not forget the windows of one of the persons mentioned in it. But to return to Sunday evening.

Mme Parangon came in at about half-past seven with her four companions. I did not appear, but continued working until I thought Colette was alone. Then I hurried downstairs. "Were you upstairs all the time?" she asked. "Yes, Madame." "Did you hear us come in?" "Yes, but as you had friends with you, I continued working." "I like the way you behave; it is unusual but admirable." "It is enough that you approve of it, Madame; it shall never be changed." "We saw you a little while ago." "Me, Madame?" "Yes, on the rampart; you make good use of your time. I have faith in a young man who is always employed. . . . But do you feel no need of relaxation?" "Relaxation? With the easy, pleasant life I lead in your house? . . . My father never rests from much rougher and more arduous work." "I know your father is a fine man and industrious, Monsieur Nicolas; one can see that from the way he has brought you up. Fourteen children is a heavy burden! But large families nearly always turn out well and I have every confidence in your future." "I gladly accept your prophecy, Madame!" "Bear in mind that I have made myself responsible for the execution of the plan I confided to you. All that I see of you confirms my decision!" "Ah, Madame, you are resolved to protect – nay, to create me!" My eyes were wet as I finished speaking. "Your gratitude delights me. . . . But you have strong passions, Monsieur Nicolas; you must learn to control them." "That will come, Madame, when they are bound by a single chain to the sweet angel who is to purge my character. . . . But until that happy moment, they stray in spite of myself. And it is best that they should stray a little, because . . . but I cannot tell you that." "I will not ask you to . . . so you are still content with my plan?" "Its fulfilment is all the happiness I hope for!" "In that case I do not think it is wrong. . . ." "Continue, Madame, I beg you. Were you going to give me leave to do something?" "I am not sure whether it will give you pleasure." "If it concerns you, Madame. . . ." "Yes." "It will please me, Madame; I shall be overwhelmed with joy and honour." "Then I will tell you. You have leave to love, as a sister and a friend, the sister of your future wife; for Fanchette shall be your wife, unless . . . I die first." "Die, Madame, die!" I cried, my voice deep with emotion. "Then you would not die alone!" I was hardly myself as I uttered these words, and Mme Parangon was astonished and impressed by my manner. Disturbed, she took my hands and held them. "What is the matter?" she asked. "You are not yourself." "By a single word you made me see the Universe as one dreadful solitude!" She released my hands (I see her still!), lifted her eyes to heaven, then let them fall again, as she exclaimed: "Poor boy, poor boy! Surely my sister will be very happy with you, Monsieur Nicolas! If I followed my own judgment I would ask my father to let her live here. . . . But there are difficulties. . . . M. Parangon is somewhat too eager . . . where she is concerned . . . in spite of my remonstrances. . . .We must wait. . . . If . . . you were married . . ." (Alas, this was the only way out, and my generous friend did not take it! I was not meant to be happy!) I must confess that I too was frightened of Parangon, and his coarse caresses for little Fanchette, and was in favour of delay. For I am naturally jealous, and have suffered grievously from this calamitous passion, which is the poisonous reek of Love!

Everyone then came in, and our conversation was interrupted. After supper Manon Bourgoin fetched Madame Parangon, and I went to the door, but as neither Madelon Baron nor Manon Prudhot was visible, I went to find Edmée and apologise for not having gone back to her. However, they had all gone to bed. Returning home I found Toinette, our pretty chambermaid, spelling out a book in the parlour, and she charmed me into a calmer frame of mind. The Morvandaises are pretty and have remarkably good figures, but their education is sadly neglected. They are a good two hundred years behind the times, and though Toinette came of an excellent family she could not read. "Are you reading, Toinette?" I asked. She did not answer, but handed me the book. I understood that she wanted me to read to her, and I asked nothing better, because, for the first time, I was afraid of the allurement of her superb figure. I read her *Mysis and Glaucus,* a Greek story printed at our press, while Toinette, her two hands on the arms of my chair, tried to follow. She was as much moved as Aimée had been by the *Epistle of Ariadne,* but for a different reason. Madame Parangon, I repeat, had given me a new value in the eyes of all who were in touch with her. "And all those lovely things you have read come out of that book?" asked Toinette ingenuously. "Oh, how wonderful to be able to read like you!" I did not understand what she meant. She sat down, her arm resting on the back of my chair, and I went on until we came to an amorous encounter, forcibly described; then, chancing to look at Toinette, I saw she was very pale and almost fainting. I stopped and, uttering a sigh, she seized my hand, saying: "I do not know what happened to me! I have never felt like that before!" She sat still for some minutes, and then seemed overcome with shame. This phenomenon will be explained shortly.

The following Sunday, when the people were coming out from Vespers at Saint Loup, I found myself in the neighbourhood of the Servignés' house. In the Place Saint-Germain I met my two Mairat cousins, the sons of my aunt at Accolay, who had just come from Paris where, after floating wood down the river, they had worked all the autumn at ditching. They were in the costume of lightermen. They greeted me and asked where they could hear Vespers? I pointed to the cathedral and promised to join them there in an hour's time. As they were leaving me, Catherine passed on her way from church and saw us. She had a pretty prayer book under her arm which at once caught my eye. "It is Edmée's," she said, "I have lost mine." I took the little book, saying: "If you will let me have it, I will give you two just like it in exchange, one for yourself and the other for your sister. I will bring them this evening, but I shall keep this one." "You can have it," she answered. "But it is not a fair exchange; I shall pay for mine." "We will see about that," I rejoined, "but let us go together. I was coming for a little gossip with you when I met two cousins of mine, who have been over-seeing the transport of the wood for Paris, and I must join them later at the cathedral where they are going to wait for me. They are good fellows and I am very fond of them." "Those two tall lads you were talking to just now?" "Yes." "You are right; you must not neglect them." So I left her at once; there was still some time before I need go to the cathedral, but I wanted to procure the two books first. I went down the *Rue des Jésuites,* at the end of which I met Mlle Edmée returning from Vespers at *Notre-Dame-là-d'hors,* with Mlle Dalis, the carpenter's daughter, and M. Parangon's cousin. I bowed respectfully without stopping.

On the way home it suddenly occurred to me that Jean Mairat, the elder of my two cousins, would suit Catherine admirably, and she would certainly be an excellent match for him. . . . M. Parangon was in, and I told him that I had met two cousins and would probably have supper with them. He very handsomely made me a present of the two books, thinking they were for my cousins. The two Mairats were waiting for me at the cathedral, and after Vespers we went to Edmée's quarter for supper, and saw the two sisters without being seen ourselves. I told the elder that Edmée had a lover, which at once inclined him to Mlle Catherine. I was not yet sure as to what I meant to do, but my ideas soon grew clearer. . . . After a light snack, which to countryfolk seemed a supper, they wished me good-night and returned to their inn.

As soon as they left me I took the two books to Catherine, whom I found with her sister. They had seen Jean and George Mairat go past. "Your cousins are fine-looking fellows," said Catherine. I replied that the elder Mairat had remarked that she looked a nice girl. Catherine blushed, as rare a thing with her as it was common with her sister. "And what does Mlle Edmée think of my two maternal cousins?" "I can only judge them by you as I do not know them; but as far as appearances go I agree with my sister." I gave her one book wrapped up, saying that I was returning hers, and dropped the other in Catherine's lap. She wanted to pay for it, but I said laughingly that it was my first present to my *cousin*, which made her blush again. I slipped away and left her to her reflections. Edmée caught hold of my coat to detain me, but I seized her hand and kissed it and escaped with the feeling of that delicious contact still upon my lips. I saw no one when I got in; I was afraid of Toinette. I went to bed early, and had the notable dream which furnished one of the scenes in the *Paysan Perverti.*

I thought I was with Edmée; we were sitting on the flowery banks of the Yonne, her yielding body supported in my arms. "Take my hand," she said, "it is yours as earnest of my heart." I took it, my lips touched hers. . . . Ecstasy held me as in a trance. "I will follow you to the ends of the earth," she continued. "Dress me as a man, and I will learn your trade; we will work together, and so our earnings will be double. My father's property will be our refuge against the future." "You are right, dear Edmée. Take me . . . and we will have Jeannette Rousseau with us too." "But of course," said Edmée, "she shall be my sister." She kissed me, and I kissed her, my heart overflowing with joy. Then she added in a low voice: "If you lose me, you will lose your happiness, never to recapture it." I thought I understood, and sought a conquest. . . . Yieldingly she surrendered all to me. . . . I woke. . . . I thought I was with Edmée . . . I saw her . . . I felt her; I was still under the inexpressible charm of that possession. . . . Ah, but a good fairy had brought me salvation by substituting reality for illusion! . . . Not my Divinity, who was purity itself; but that generous girl, who had saved me from the shame of being Jeanneton's favoured lover. She had gone to Maine Blonde, her friend and neighbour, and had borrowed a pretty little room which gave on one of the ancient city turrets. This had been made into a garden, and it was easy to climb up by the trellis work to the open window of the loft in which was my cubicle. I watched Madelon depart, half dreaming still and thinking it was Edmée. I got up and then my mind cleared, and I realised all that I owed to Madelon's tender sympathy. Reader, I am not like other men, and above all not like those who have grown corrupt in towns! I threw myself on my knees and worshipped Madelon as an angel of charity, who had given happiness freely and without my having to bargain for it. . . . This dream had charm in the fullest meaning of the word. Adrift in memory I still recapture it; an exquisite rapture, a ravishment of the senses which fades and weakens in the surroundings of our waking life; a cosmic sensation, tempered by that languorous abandonment which exists only in dreams. . . .

When I rose next morning, I retraced my dream in twenty lines of verse, free of adornment and of fancy (which I never mix with facts for fear of losing truth; fancy would in time delude even me). [For these verses see the *Drame de la Vie,* page 1208.]

All the afternoon I was under the charm, but it was the charm of Madelon only, and I wrote a little poem which I said over and over as I worked:

> *Jesus loved Madeleine and I love Madelon; the one was filled with Jesus, and the other with my love. There is no happiness save in possessing her.*

After the adventure which I have just described, my *Elegy* of the 12th of November to the fair Baron will perhaps be read with some surprise. In it I ask her modestly:

> *Why is she not satisfied with being fair, with having a thousand beauties of eye and voice and slender body? I admit that I would grieve if, to these assembled charms and the lilies and roses of her skin, she did not add a celestial smile, and even sweet caresses, but these are but a bait luring us with fair hopes that remained unsatisfied. I complain that while permitting me to say I love her, she yet remains indifferent; does she think that the wounds her face inflicts heal easily? "Ah, cruel! you have heard my sighs and, in that moment of weakness, thought it easy to subdue me. You accosted me with treacherous sweetness and shyly lavished your pretended favours. . . . Ah, you are but a Circe who, yoking our mortal weakness with cruel favours, steals away our reason. . . . What arts do you employ so that, were I savage as a lion, courageous as Hercules, yet would one glance of yours subdue me. . . . A sweet smile invited me to confess my passion. . . . Did you but feign to burn with the same fire that*

> *consumes me? . . . But it was all a delusion. . . . I imagined your tenderness, your smile, your . . . I was mistaken. . . . Ah, cruel! then why do not my eyes deceive me as does my vanity? The traitors only see more clearly when discovering your beauty! . . . Fair idol, pardon my extravagance! I thought you responsive, because I was vulnerable: I judged your heart by mine. . . . But pity me when you see my tears. Say: 'It is for me he suffers, my charms have wounded him. . . .' May I perish of your buffets, all-beautiful! . . . To die through you is nothing, if the end were at your knees. . . . To die of love for you! ah, that were an enviable lot! What better use could be made of life? Yes, I would die, rather than pain you or bring one sigh to your lips. And then my happy shade, free of the body, would follow your footsteps everywhere and mingle with your thoughts; two souls united in one body. And I should gain by this fair union, since the body would be yours. . . . Ah, heavens, what ecstasy is this, what joy? Already I am sinking to the shadowy banks, and my soul is drowned in passionate tenderness! I die . . . ! When will you follow after, sweetheart? . . . For you will follow me, Madelon, your beauty harvested perhaps in the very flower of your youth. . . . Wretch! Do you desire her death? . . . No, no! Blossom, sweet flower of Spring! But know that it is ordained by Destiny that when a lover dies of love and enters into the kingdom of the dead, his soul shall mingle with his mistress's until such time as death shall separate them anew and they become two lovers in the Elysian fields. . . . Better this life below for lovers! Eternity gives time enough for happiness, and after death, our unveiled souls are face to face; mind looks into mind, temples of Truth. Sweet errors beset our sojourn here, and their deceitful appearance gives rise to others. But some day our shades will live and love in perfect understanding."*

Such was my Elegy, which can be seen in its original form in the *Drame de la Vie,* pages 1209-10.

I gave it to Madelon when I had made a fair copy, that is to say on the 27th of November, the day after I had finished it. As I presented it, I said: "You sing like the fairies; I rhyme as best I can, and I think as you compel me to think. . . ." I do not know whether she quite understood my clumsily oracular remark; but she smiled on seeing the folded paper, and seemed eager to read it.

This poem of more than a hundred and fifty lines was by no means the only one on which I was occupied during November. I marvel at myself now! I was working on my *Séjour des Graces,* introducing Mlles Laloge, Lalois, Dugravier, and Hollier; and for which I projected a separate *Eulogy* for each of the following: the Mlles Baron, Maine Blonde, Carouge, Annette, Douy, Bourdillat, Léger, Gremmeray, Nombret, Gendot, Dhall, Morillon, Meslot, Tangis, Mailly, Servigné, Marianne Roullot, Ferrand, the elder Linard, the elder Imbert, Bourdignon, the sisters Duchamp, Hélène Luidivine, Valois, Laconche, Lambelin, Edmée Julien, Hérisson, Maufront, Sophie Xavagny, Drin, Goton the Holliers' chambermaid, Marote and Toinette. . . . For in telling all these girls I loved them, I only said what I thought. My *vows*, my *admiring apostrophes* and *desirous* appeals were quite sincere; and if I had not actually before me the dated original records of this tangle of inclinations and strong passions, I should find it hard to believe that I had not confused the order of events. But there they are, these old note-books, trusty repositories for forty to forty-five years of all my thoughts, written for my own satisfaction and not to mislead others; hidden from everyone save Madelon Baron, because, imagining that there I neither loved nor was beloved, I felt I could show her all my freaks and fancies. My chief aim was to preserve my *Anniversaries,* for which I have had a fondness all my life, and one which doubtless will be the last to die. For me the future is a fearful whirlpool, the depths of which I dare not plumb: but like a man who fears the water, I throw a stone into it: a record of personal experience, and then I add: *"What shall I think a year hence on the same day and at the same hour?"* The idea tickles my fancy; I am party to its development throughout the year; and as nearly every day is an anniversary of some recorded incident, I enter every day upon some new enjoyment. I say to myself: "Well, here I am in that future from which I would not have dared to raise the veil could I have done so. It is the present; I am living it; soon it will be the past, as is that happening which foreran it." I savour the present; through my verses I travel back into the past; and equally possess what is and what has ceased to be; and, if in the right mood (which does not always happen), I throw another stone into the future, which will in its turn be stranded by the ebbing tide of time. . . . That is why my dates are so exactly noted, and still are daily noted in my books. But during my twelve years of death in the flower of my age, from 1755 to 1766, I recorded nothing, or very little. . . . The variety of my emotions and my loves, their strength, unweakened by variety, prove how far from truth is the best of novels, with its logical, unerring sequence of events, its fatal symmetry, misleading a multitude of young men and women, and making them unhappy by transforming ordinary human nature and making it appear a monstrous iniquity! I affirm, and I believe it to be true, that it is the personal in this work which will make it more useful than the best romance.

On the 11th of November I had written some verses to Mlles Laloge and Lalois, in which I told them: "*That I was bewitched and ravished. I confessed that I was stirred even by the most ordinary beauty, and begged them to deduce from that the extremity of my passion for them, who were the fairest of the fair:*

> *Your features are my conquerors and your charms all powerful in the enchantment of my senses, O daughters of the God of Love! The trouble which the sight of you causes in your lover, maintains him in a continual frenzy. My ever ardent senses, fired by the two of you, paint me the ravishing picture*

> *of Laloge, and then the dress and grace and features of Lalois; and if in the end my heart should tell me, Laloge, that you excel, yet it loves one as fondly as the other, and would set so charming a pair upon Parnassus.*

It is only too obvious that, while talking of equality, I let a preference for Mlle Laloge appear, and indeed I always set her far above the other! But I do not say this. I entreat them in lines which I have not quoted: "*To believe that I value their favours equally, and that I could not wish to violate their deep and tender friendship by desiring anything of one I was not burning to take from the other.*" We shall see in the sequel that everything went well for me. Far from being scorned, by some incredible miracle the refined and beautiful Laloge, modest, sensitive and virtuous, became to me another Julie Barbier! The destined bride of an old man, and thinking me more wretched and more lonely than I was, she made me a father. . . . Young Lalois, led astray. . . .

On the 18th of November, while I was working on the first canto of the *Séjour des Graces,* of which Mlle Laloge was the heroine, I had a morning Dream, in which handsome, majestic *Xérine Legueux* was prepared to bestow her favours on me. I did not want her to be unaware of this, and so described my felicity (which was actual) in eighteen lines of verse, of which I made two copies, one for the dream partner and one for the real, and despatched them by my young Bardet. As he was a handsome lad, he was always welcome for his own sake, and thus contributed to the success of my productions, somewhat as the pastry cook *Rouget's* cakes added to the value of the Abbé *Cottin's* verses. I will not moralise on my imprudence; it had no unpleasant results, partly because girls rarely bear ill-will to those who praise them, and partly because Bardet was an ingenious little rascal, who watched his opportunity while apparently playing about in front of the door. But if my verses had chanced to fall into the hands of parents or of brothers, the consequences would have been serious. . . . Here is the *Dream.*

> *In that interval when the senses are still drunken, when the eyes are open though the heart still sleeps, when care and anguish and bitter anxiety have not yet made their assault upon the waking breast, my vagabond mind expressed its fire for you in sweet illusion, and you were clasped in my arms. I wetted your fair breast with a thousand tender kisses. You made as if to counter my amorous design, but, at that exquisite moment, my impetuous love, which was being made happy by another Beauty, fumed off in a froth of pleasure, and the dream itself was banished by the light of day.*

I am more astonished by my song in praise of Mlle Annette Bourdeaux, then fifteen years of age, than by any of my other erotic verses. Rhymed with great freedom, it was addressed to Mlle Baron, and was intended to be a part of my long poem. This was the exordium:

> *To Sylvia (Madelon Baron)*
>
> *Suffer my Phœbus, O indulgent Sylvia, to paint you a Beauty by whom my soul is ravished; then if you judge her charms too weak and impotent to take my heart and steal my senses, you shall see me gladly render the spell harmless by breaking the links of that chain at your command.*

I will only give an analysis of the rest: I say that "*the young beauty I am going to describe combines a proud and noble carriage with a sweet smile; and a fine dignity informs her merriment. Her delicately formed body is slender as a reed; her walk is quick, and her gestures lively. No gold or silver shines upon her dress; her grace is the sole ornament of its simplicity. A gallant cap, a masterpiece of taste rather than of art, crowns her bright forehead, innocent of paint, and prisons the golden hair. A band of jet enhances the lilies of her neck, and her breast is veiled with fine transparent tissue. For such slenderness a corset is inhuman. A love is born with* *every movement of her flowered skirt and our eyes are ravished by new charms: Venus would glory in that dimpled thigh, the Graces shaped that leg. . . . Dress but insults the living store of beauty and allurement it jealously conceals: even the tantalising little shoe is as nothing to the treasure within it: a foot for Hebe or for Venus. . . ."*

After this I proceed, incredible as it may seem, to a detailed description of Annette unclothed. . . . But such was my custom in the poems I termed *Eulogies*, and throughout the *Séjour des Graces.*

I began these verses on the 26th of November, after I had finished the *Elegy to Mlle Baron* mentioned above, and gave a copy to Madelon on the 8th of December. How could I bring myself to give my licentious outpourings about a young neighbour to a charming girl who loved me? For one thing, Gaudet d'Arras's repeated assertion that Madelon was a flirt encouraged me to drop all restraint with her; for another, with a writer's vanity I was loth that the fruits of my pen should be completely lost; and as I dared not send my verses to the heroine, I showed them to the only person I could trust, so that some one should see them:

> *Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter.*
>
> PERS.

In the third place, for several months Madelon had shown me so much kindness that I gave her all my confidence; she was a friend in the same sense that Loiseau was later, and later still Thérèse; I told her everything without reserve and in our frequent talks laid bare my heart, save for that one sealed corner which shrined the image of Mme Parangon. . . . As Mlle Baron read my Praise of Annette without showing any disapproval, it occurred to me to show it to my friend Colombat, Annette's betrothed and since her husband. I read it to him, and he seemed delighted by the idea of having a copy. But before allowing him to make one, I had the sense to consult Mlle Baron, and then I realised how this sweet girl combined instinctive modesty with her indulgence towards myself. She made me see how unsuitable were my verses for one so young, and especially as coming from her future husband: she enumerated the mistakes in form which might make me ridiculous; she pointed out the indecencies, and all with so much consideration and restraint that I was convinced without being abashed. I thanked her, adding by an impulse which I could not control, that she had spoken like another Mme Parangon. She smiled, and I added much more in token of my affection. And indeed I had a fondness for her which, though neither violent nor passionate, had steadily increased from the first moment of our acquaintance. And what will be thought of Mlle Baron's love for a printer's little apprentice? Surely he must have had some special quality, for he seems to have won the affection of Aimée, Madelon, Edmée Servigné, Tiennette, Manon Prudhot, Toinette and, above all, of the divine Colette? How was it? I think I know. I was sincere, frank, and warmhearted; I had fine eyes, and my face was of the noble Roman cast, introduced into our family by the Quatrevaux women. My lips invited kisses, and it was my eyes and mouth that first attracted to me. . . . But with Madelon, there were other reasons too: she liked my country simplicity, natural kindliness and candour; I came of nice people and a good family, with the best connections and best reputation in the district; and on top of this was the consideration with which Mme Parangon honoured me. . . . Let us leave for a moment the summary of my activities as a poet to say a word about Colette.

I finished my Praise of Annette on the morning of the 8th of December, one of the most beautiful days of my life – perhaps the happiest and most romantic.

Mme Parangon was in holiday attire, for it was a festival, and I had never seen her dressed with so much taste and elegance. She noticed my admiration at dinner. It was freezing. Directly we rose from the table she went out, and I saw her go into the house of her sister, Mme Minon, the attorney's wife, whom she accompanied to Vespers. I stayed in, and sent everyone else out. They asked nothing better; even Toinette had a visit to pay to the beautiful Villetard, wife of the wine agent and a family friend. I made a big fire in the parlour, and sat down to read. The book which fell to hand was Corneille's *Cid*, and I read it for the first time with rapturous delight. By the end of it I was genuinely in love with Chimène. I was dreamily stirring the fire as I savoured what I had read, when I heard some one at the half door. I was almost vexed at being disturbed. . . . The green door was pushed open and, through the baise door, I saw a lady, who stopped as though she hesitated to come in . . . I started . . . it was Mme Parangon! I cleared a little crimson armchair, and offered it to her "It is lucky you have a good fire, for I am chilled through." I saw that her feet were cold, but that she was equally afraid of spoiling her pretty shoes, and of taking them off in front of me. . . . She looked so lovely that I was carried away and, without thinking, fell upon my knees and pulled off her shoes without undoing them. . . . "You might at least give me my slippers." They were on the little table, and I had only to stretch out my hand for them. I made to put them on for her, but she drew back her feet. I got up to put away those I had taken off. "Won't you sit down?" I did so. Profound silence. "You were reading and I have disturbed you?" "I have just finished the *Cid*. . . . Ah, how unlucky was Chimène, and how lovable!" "Yes, she was in a terrible position." "Oh, most terrible!" "It seems to me that suffering like that . . . makes . . . love stronger?" "Oh, surely, Madame! So much so that. . . ." "But how do you come to know that at your age?" I blushed in sudden confusion. . . . A moment later I ventured: "I know it just as well as Rodrigue did." "Impossible!" "I assure you that it is true, Madame." "You have never known an unhappy . . . love." "Rather say happy, Madame." "Happy or unhappy. . . . You are a mere child." "In mind, but not in heart." "Poor boy, with what feeling he said that! . . . Do you consider the *Cid* a good play?" "If it is a bad play, Madame, I am a fool; I know nothing; I am as stupid as the author." Mme Parangon laughed aloud: "Ah, if anyone could hear you!" she said. "As stupid as the great Corneille!" "I fancied he must be a great man, because I liked his play so much." "Whom did you like best, Chimène or Rodrigue?" "Oh, Chimène. . . . And you, Madame?" "Rodrigue." I reflected for a moment: then an illuminating idea occurred to me: "I know why." "Why?" "But . . ." I did not dare say more. She had to urge me for a long time before I continued: "I like Chimène best, Madame, because she belongs to your sex. Each time that she speaks it is with your voice and your manner; I see your face, your attire . . . your . . . beauty . . ." She blushed, and I grew bolder: "You are, as it were, a frontispiece to the Play, such as those put at the beginning of Ovid's Amores." "A pretty idea." "Would you condescend to tell me how you see Rodrigue when you are reading?" "Oh . . . Rodrigue. . . . I picture him as young, ingenuous . . . warm-hearted and pure . . . with faults indeed, but pardonable ones." "Ah, Madame . . ." I stopped. "You were going to say something?" "Yes . . . Madame." "I would like to hear it." "It was nothing, Madame." "That is mere evasion! Come!" "If I must speak, and you command me . . . I was going to say: Am I not rather like Rodrigue?" "People so often resemble each other . . . but I wish you all the virtues of Rodrigue, and still more his happiness. . . . Heavens! how hot it is in here!" "Shall I open the door, Madame?" "No, I am going out again . . ." (*rising*). "Listen, Monsieur Nicolas. If you are studious, economical and industrious, as I know you are . . . surely we can find a Chimène? . . . Your parents are good people and highly respected; your father is a friend of my father . . ." "Oh, Madame, my father has the very highest opinion of yours!" "And my father is very fond of your father!" She walked two or three times up and down the room and then sent me to fetch a new rose-coloured cloak, probably so that she could put on her shoes in my absence. Then she gave me her blue one to take to her room, and when I came down again, she went out. . . . Ah God, how lovely she looked! . . . I was still lost in admiration when she came into the room again. "I have forgotten something." She ran upstairs, leaving her muff with me. She came lightly and quietly down again, and found me adoring the things she had discarded. She pretended not to notice anything and, standing by the fire, said: "If anyone asks for me, I am with Manon Bourgoin. . . . Think a little about that Chimène I spoke of." And she went out smiling. "Oh, most adorable woman!" I exclaimed, before she had gone two paces. I think she heard; her pace slackened for a moment, and then quickened. . . . When Toinette came in, I was still lost in an ecstasy. I returned to the parlour with her, and settled myself behind the screen to work till evening. . . . Oh, happy afternoon, for which I wept sweet tears in Paris in 1756!

On the 10th of December I began my Praise of Mlle Carouge, and finished it on the 17th. It is somewhat different from the others, as my heroine's most obvious charm lay in an alluring artlessness, and a certain indolence in her speech and walking that went straight to the heart. It was short:

> *I beseech you to hear my prayer to-day, O divine Apollo, O God of my eternal invocation! The flame which drives me would picture a girl in the colours of her innocence, rather than by the detail of her heavenly beauty. Come Love and inspire with every gift the lover who lays his verses on your altar, for it is Love himself I sing in singing the delights of the candid Carouge, my tender fair.*
>
> *Merry and innocent, simple and charming, one would think, to look at her, that one could do anything with impunity. Sweet indolence, child of pleasure and mother of the tender passion, casts a spell over her, more potent than any physical charm. . . . She is eager and playful as a child, yet if passion, grown bold and insolent, flames into licence, her fine pride confronts it with a strict modesty, that well defends the most celestial charms!*

And I pass on to describe these.

While I was thus engaged with young Carouge's *artless indolence,* another subject of most intimate concern to me stirred my muse: my *Songe Éveillé* is dated the 17th of December. Two things stand out in the history of this poem: my growing corruption, and my first experience of a theatre. . . . (But what an experience! It was *La Crèche*, which everyone knows, as it used to be shown every year in Paris at the Gate of the *Petit-Pont de l'Hôtel-Dieu.*) As the proverb says: *all new, all wonderful,* and the marionettes might well astound a young peasant, quite new to the arts although so far along the path of pleasure! I was bound to be enraptured! . . . But before the curtain rose and during the piece, which was played to a very crowded hall, unexpected things happened. This is how it all came about.

One evening after supper, that is to say at a quarter past eight, as we had Aimée Châtelain over from Joigny with us, Tourangeot suggested making up a party for the Crèche, with Toinette, Jeannette Geolin (Jean Lelong's mistress), his own Marie, Bardet, and myself. Our chiefs were having supper in the town; so Jean stayed to keep house while his mistress came with us, together with two little work-girls who happened along, Fleury the Parisian and pretty Luce. We took our places on arrival; I was between Aimée and Toinette, who were equally fond of me as a decent lad and the favourite of the most respected person in their household. They vied with each other in finding nice things to say to me while we were waiting for the curtain to rise, singing my praises in antiphone, the incense passing under my nose. . . . With a friendly little impulse, Aimée kissed me. I returned the compliment . . . more than once. The place was so crowded and so badly lighted that no one paid any attention, except Toinette who laughed at us, Tourangeot who was jealous, and Marie who looked surprised. Luce and Fleury were trying their hardest to see through the curtain, and Bardet was playing the fool as usual. . . . The audience sat on the steps while waiting; but directly the play began everyone stood up. I put Aimée in front of me and Toinette, who was tall, took Luce and Fleury in front of her; Tourangeot was looking after Marie, and Bardet got on his shoulders to have more scope for his foolery. After the show had begun, I noticed that a pretty brunette, daughter of Xavagny who kept an eating-house, was straining to see an Egyptian dancer from behind Toinette, who was right in her way; so I took her hand to put her between us. I lifted her up a little and, by chance (I protest), my hand touched. . . . We were in a vat room which was by no means weathertight, and in the middle of the Adoration of the Magi, over which everyone was in ecstasies, a piece of canvas came unfastened, and a gust of wind blew out all the lights. . . . This is the truth; and if I were more to blame, I should confess it just as frankly; Sophie Xavagny had left me as chance had placed me. But Aimée saw what was happening and, either from goodness or to save me from the unpleasant consequences of such a liberty should Sophie's parents chance to hear of it, took both my hands in hers and kissed me. . . . I felt an exquisite thrill and pressed her to my heart. . . . The lamps were relighted, and I glanced at Sophie to see if she was cross with me; but she smiled. I put one arm round her and the other round Aimée, and hugged them both. . . . I saw Sophie again, for this adventure had endeared her to me. . . . But how express the ferment in which it left my senses! For the first time I was attracted to adultery. . . . The same night I had the following dream:

## DAY-DREAM

### AN ADVENTURE OF YESTERDAY, DECEMBER 17TH, 1752, AT THE MARIONETTES, WHERE I SAW THE CRIB WITH AIMÉE, TIENNETTE, SOPHIE CHAVAGNY AND TOURANGEOT.

*How often, O sweet Sleep, your illusions bring true pleasure beneath a cloak of unreality! In a place where the Loves and the Laughters are ever busy about naughty pranks, Love placed me, by some happy chance, near to a young girl whose beauty eclipsed all else beside. At the urge of my desire I tried a thousand means to kindle her with the flame of my own ardent madness, and the swaying crowd, discomfiting to all the rest, did not embarrass me, but served me well. For our two bodies were pressed together by its ebb, so that my hand and arm and thigh and knee all felt your treasures! I lifted the child a little in my arms, for she was breathless at the pressure of the people, and a gust of wind blew out our candle at that fortunate moment, to give me opportunity.*

*O sly Gods of the Loves, what were you making ready for me with all these movements and sweet counter-movements? She turns at last, and I have my face to her breast: ah, God! what happiness! . . . My position stooped me somewhat, and I had to change it. I gentled the fair one naked on my knee and, although she resisted, tossed her there. I set aside the interference of her modest* *hand and, raising her chemise, watered her shell with my most precious juices. Great Gods, what rapture! And if the vanquished Fair cried "Thief!" it was in thought alone. Taking advantage of her trouble and the darkness, I gave her a second taste of my bravery, clasping her close in my arms, and kissing her, our bodies interlacing and made one. Vain was the effort, for a knot of her chemise had closed the doorway to all amorous ecstasy!*

*Carried away by the madness of my lustful rage, I was about to redouble my assault, my devastation, when suddenly the Fair changed places with another. . . .*

*I am unhorsed, but my shaken body wallows under this other; I pull up her skirt and take my post at the silky crossroads; I was not fooled by this change of ovens. I pierced the new maidenhead, although it resisted and delayed. . . . Ye mighty Gods, what a delight was mine in the midst of her leapings and dying struggles! But those who are killed by Love and come to life again, thereafter never lose their desire to die afresh. I feel my passion born again, I am full of strength once more, and set my resources for a second death. Ah, God, the pleasures I tasted on that day, and the numberless tributes in which my love found ease! But at this blissful moment the candle came alight again, and behold, it was the fair Laloge who had received my fires! Ah, what amazement, and how sweet this surprise when I recovered from it! I said a few words to her, and understood from her deep blushes that she had deliberately made me happy. She had recognised me, and given herself, knowing how my heart was parched for love. . . . Later we witnessed certain tasteless shows, in which our townsmen yet find a hundred marvels; but this tedium came to a sudden end, and, in the darkness of the night, the pressure of the crowd carried my straying hands again to beauties which I recognised as those of my lady. . . . Again I tasted that sport which had already given me such delightful moments. I held my enchantress firmly in her place, and in two movements was one with her again.*

*Quick parry answered thrust, and since all went so well and the Fair reflected the fire, which was blazing in my forge, with throat and breasts, I never suspected that I had a second time changed my field for sowing.*

*But when we were outside, I found that it was Aimée Châtelain who, thinking herself beloved and finding her clothes trussed up about her, had gaily come halfway to meet me.*

> *One might have been content with lesser value, yet who would believe it, that same evening I also possessed Goton, the comely chambermaid of the divine Hollier; for, far from being exhausted by my previous exertions, I found that they had only whetted my insatiable appetite. . . .*
>
> *As Goton was returning, she stumbled, and I, who see in every lovely woman nothing but a sure prey for my most fortunate snare, made two assaults on her as she lay upon the ground. Then I put away my shepherd's pipe, since this last exploit ended the day for me.*

And this licentious poem, begun next day, the 18th, and finished on the 22nd, was intended for Madelon Baron, to whom I gave it on the 23rd as it stands here. I presented this hundred and twelve lines of filth, under the title of *Songe Éveillé,* to a charming girl who was far too good for me – I, who had been called "the modest girl" by my old and honoured cousin, Droin of The Villages! . . . But this "dream" had some basis in reality. Aimée had been touched by my ardour; and it might be said that what follows was the outcome of her admiration for me. Whatever may be said, "commiscibility" is the finest and best-founded proof of esteem between two friends of opposite sex. Aimée thought I was virtuous, and assumed I still possessed that virgin flower which it is so sweet to lose. . . . She said and thought, without either thinking or saying it: "Poor boy! I must teach him what he does not know, even at the expense of my innocence and honour, and of all that I hold dearest . . ." She had no thought of wrongdoing or unfaithfulness; and as for any danger from her husband, she knew me too well to fear that. . . . She was not sleeping in the kitchen with Toinette, but in Bourgoin's room, as the foreman was away for a few days. . . . We went upstairs together, and she made me come into her room to talk about Edmée Servigné, with the idea of bringing us together again. I told her about my cousins. . . . She seemed pensive. . . . A moment later she kissed me. . . . We were together until two o'clock, when I went up to my attic. This was the only time Aimée fell with me, and I am sure that she has never done so again with anyone.

When I got into my own bed I found it warm! I was extremely uneasy. I discovered that my sylph had been there and had fled when she heard me on the stairs; but she had not come down to listen for me on the second floor where I was! My life is strange!

These chance adventures interrupted the composition of my *Séjour des Graces,* which was my main business. I was beginning again on the song to *Émilie Laloge*, which I had left at the twentieth line, when I was struck by the thought of all that I owed to Maîne Blonde, who unconsciously opened the way for my sylph to come to me, and I decided to celebrate her charms. Maîne was full of wit and grace; she was quick and eager, with a pretty voice and exquisite taste. Though a tiny little person, she had fine features and her great eyes were the most beautiful I have ever seen, save for Mme Parangon's. My verses began with an invocation to Love:

> *"Love, tender love, whose pleasant discourse is more agreeable to the heart than the most brilliant harmony of Muses, hear and inspire me!*
>
> *That God who heats the world each day, knows not the tender songs that love dictates.*

*Cupid has laid aside his arrows to arm him with Maine's charms. Ah, but your pardon, Muses; your pardon, fair-skinned Phœbus; I shall paint the beauties of my Dear and sing Love's power but ill without the help of Memory's* children and the God of Taste. . . ." I proceed to describe her *"figure, carriage, and delightful smile; her eager mutinous expression; her eye, mouth, bosom, and all her other charms. . . . Love is enthroned upon her pretty breast; his lips drink from* 'the rose-bud'"*;* and I devise other games for him, which no doubt tempted me also. I ended by saying that *"Maine was moulded by Love himself who, when he had finished his modelling, kindled the flame of life with his own torch."*

The Envoy was an acrostic on *Maine Blonde.* I gave the poem first to Madelon Baron, but did not consult her about sending it to Maîne. Instead I sounded the latter with a little song set to a well-known air, which I despatched by Bardet in the evening.

> *When Nature makes a little person so very comely and so exquisite in every detail, she thinks that she is modelling in miniature.*

Bardet slipped the little song into a book Maîne was reading and had put down for a moment to speak to somebody. She found it when she took up her book again, and immediately set it to the right tune. She smiled, and Bardet who was watching at a distance ran back to tell me that she looked very pleased. I gave him the longer poem at once, and as some one else had meanwhile come to see Maîne, he managed to put it under her book without being noticed, where Maîne found it when she returned to her seat. She opened it eagerly, and gave a cry of surprise when she read the superscription: *"In praise of Mademoiselle Maine Blonde."* Having glanced round to make sure that nobody observed her, she put it away. Maîne was my friend ever after she discovered that I was the author; but she had no opportunity of showing this until 1760.

I finished the poem to Maîne on the 15th of January, and on the 16th put in hand the one which should have come first of all, my *Praise of Madelon Baron.** But I think this delay was a matter of policy for, by beginning with the others, I prepared her for the freedoms of my brush when it came to her own portrait. Also I prudently combined with it my Praise of her second sister, the dimpled *Berdon.* I begin by apologising for my long delay *"but I needed practice in the use of my arms before extolling her; such perfect beauty was no subject for a schoolboy's first* 'attempt' . . ." My fancy pictures me as *"embarking upon a stormy sea; yet it is only after storm that the retreating waves leave Venus naked for our adoration. Let us raise altars to her in our grateful hearts; let us make amorous pilgrimage, with Cytherea as our goal. I am already a pilgrim to the Abode of Beauty, which is called Madelon. This enchanted land has two suns, the eyes of Madelon; they shine with a calm clear light, but kindle fires which burn up and consume if the Goddess does not temper them with kindness. . . . Heedless I roamed about its pleasant places, until Love whispered in my ear: Come with me, my torch shall be your guide. . . ."* The child God makes me look at everything, and my description, geographical in appearance but gallant in intention, is made somewhat less free than in my other Praises by the use of technical expressions. It is sown with delicate compliments: *"When Love holds sway in Madelon, the vermilion of the rose triumphs over the lily's whiteness; but when he withdraws, the virgin Virtue is enthroned, as white as she is pure, and the snows of the lily triumph over the flaming rose. . . ."* Then I describe her anger with its cold rebuffs and harshness, and suggest that she should favour this state, as she is then less fair than when wrapped in a fond languor: *"In the sweet content of love's fulfilment, the vivid brightness of your skin makes you like Flora decked in her finest colours; in the great eyes you fix upon your lover are smouldering fires veiled by the brimming tears of pleasure. Love is himself enchanted and never tires of looking at his handiwork or of displaying it to my dazzled eyes."* Then I embark on a detailed description which must have flattered my fair one, for she was truly beautiful. One by one I scrutinise her charms; forgetting none, and all with the keen eye to detail of a man in love and the artlessness of our neighbours, the Morvandais, who say aloud, and before everyone, to a pretty girl who does not blush at it: "Marie, you have a fine 3 15 14, and a thick 16 15 9 12 21 for I have seen it. . . ." *"At sight of certain charms Love himself loses countenance and, forgetting he is my guide, thinks only of the rights he has in all fair women; he takes the first draught and enjoys them at his will, and lovers cannot complain, or only by being jealous. . . . I see Love made happy"* (no doubt to have the chance of describing the act of possession) *"and then he returns to me who have been watching over the garments: 'Psyche herself is less fair,' he says, and proves it to me by describing each perfection he has explored. 'But Destiny summons me to the heavens and I bequeath this Beauty worthy of the Gods to you. . . .' With these words my guide left that habitation and now mortals come there to adore Love. Such are you to me, fair Madelon, in duty bound to ease my pain. Ah, cruel, tell me, how can I defy this God to whom you owe so much?"*

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*For these verses, see the *Drame de la Vie,* p. 707 ff.

I have done nothing more sensual and licentious, more tender or more ardent, except perhaps those burning lines inspired by Colette before my attempt upon her. . . . Alas, a barbarous hand, which has done me many another injury, has torn these from my book, and nothing remains but a few notes made upon the covers! . . . My *Praise of Madelon* was finished on the 24th of January; but before I had given it to her, it occurred to me that it might fall into her sisters' hands, and I thought it prudent to add my *Praise of Berdon,* whose beauty moreover well merited a distinguished place in the *Séjour des Graces.* Three days completed this little work.

> *Soon Love returned leading the Graces and Pleasures and all that had departed from me. I felt myself grow drowsy as I enjoyed the cool shade of the close-leaved trees; I tried to struggle, but my eyes closed and I slept, for a God had willed it. In the Place of Delights, whither I followed their footprints, I found myself surrounded by the Graces. I marvelled at a hundred beauties, at Jeannette and Manon, at the graceful Lalois, the loving Madelon, at the two sisters Bourdillat and the divine Laloge, and at all the fair ones of Love's*

> *hymning: Blonde and Legueux, Bourdeaux, young Dugravier, Roullot and Carouge, and the entrancing Hollier. I was looking upon these when I chanced to turn my head, and saw a youthful beauty, whom Cypris self would celebrate. . . . It was Berdon. . . .*

Follows a description of her various charms, wherein I say affectedly:

> *In all her beauties, whether seen or unseen, the lily triumphs over the brightness of the rose. . .*

and I end with a double acrostic:

> *My tender heart, vowed from its youth to love, has ever asked the triple support of wit and beauty and a sensitive soul. Love smiled; the mischievous God forgot his cunning. "No, no," he said tormentingly, and of the three left but the sensitive soul. Free now from that unhappiness which gives my heart its constancy, I find no thrall has any sweetness in it save from you: when the heart is fed upon pure ardour it has everything.*

Madelon thought this commonplace acrostic song delightful, and her sweet voice lent beauty to it throughout the afternoon and for several days after; so that Mme Parangon said to me laughing: "It was you, was it not, who wrote the words that Mademoiselle Madelon is always singing?" I pointed out that the acrostic was to Madelon and her sister Berdon, and she was satisfied.

This double acrostic was the Envoy to the two poems which I gave to Madelon. But important things happened between the 17th and the 27th of January, which I have omitted so as not to break the thread. Let us go back to the 20th of January, which was a Sunday and the Eve of St Agnès, patron saint of the girls of the Saint-Renobert parish, where Madelon was chief churchwarden. From that day there were no barriers between us and our interests became inseparable.

On the morning of January the 20th, I was greatly stirred by the sight of Madelon, whom I had never seen dressed so provocatively. I was leaning over the half door and, as she went by, she said: "Aren't you coming to High Mass, you pagan?" And she passed on quickly without waiting for a reply. Her many graces, her figure, her voluptuous walking, with a something embarrassed, indefinably confused about her movements, excited a perfect tempest of desires. "How attractive she is!" I thought. "How lucky to be the sole possessor of so fair a girl's affection. . . ." As had so often happened, I forgot all other plans for the future: like a savage, I could see nothing but the immediate present. I hurried away to work at my verses for her with an enthusiasm I had not till then experienced; and remained in this state of exaltation till dinner time.

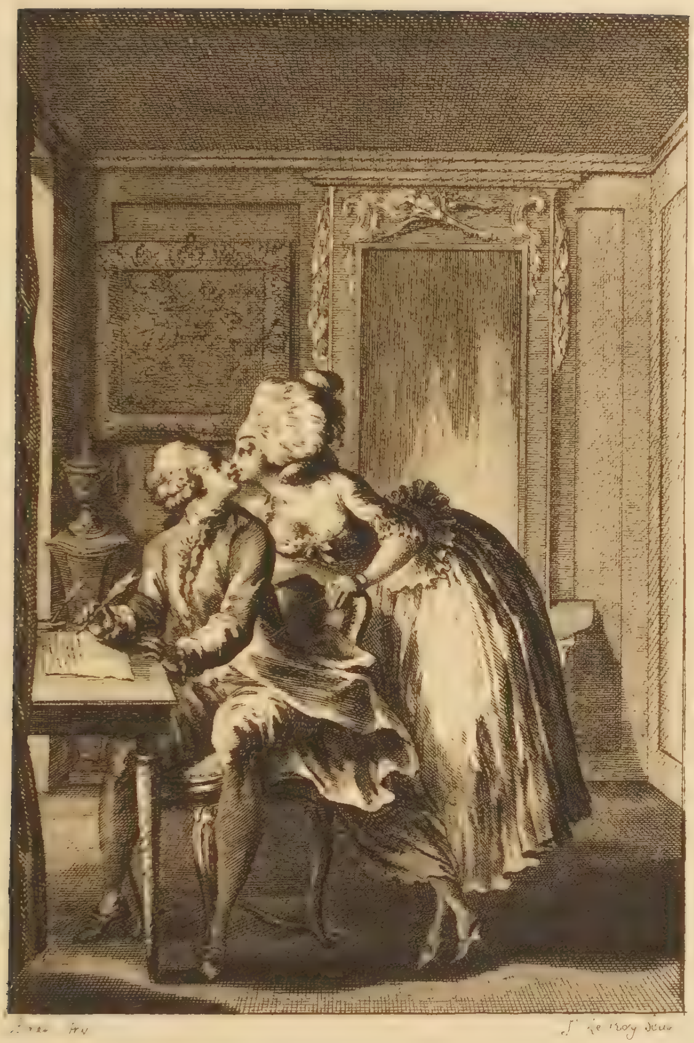
Everyone went out after dinner, and by two o'clock I was absolutely alone. I remembered that the morrow was the feast day for maidens and that Madelon was leader of it, and it occurred to me to write something for the occasion. I decided to use a metre that would fit some air she was fond of, and could think of nothing pleasanter than the song *"Oh for an undissembling heart,"* on which she had improvised so agreeably in the preceding autumn. The idea came to me of writing some sort of answer to the same tune, in the form of an acrostic with alternate lines, *Agnès* being the key word. I sat down at Madame Parangon's little secretary, the Muse possessed me, and I wrote:

> *You know, O fair Timander, that Agnès engraved this divine injunction on her young and tender heart: follow the saints as far as you are able, and do not bring to the task reluctance or distaste, postponement or belief in human dogmas! But, if you grow cruel to a faithful lover, why this severity? If his unhappiness, Madelon, is solely due to you, how can you find in your heart to punish his courage? Read his pure homage in his heart: has there been purer? None has*

> *ever been so certain that he could make Agnès-Timander yielding and amorous! Reward Silvander for burying this fire in ashes, and tell him that at last Timander's generous heart will delay no longer but teach him to be happy!*

As I was finishing this parody and before the last word had been written, I heard the half door open. It was about three o'clock: vespers had just finished at the parish church where Madelon had been collecting for her saint, and those at the Cordeliers were just beginning. I thought it was Toinette come back and did not interrupt my work. I had finished and was singing the words over to myself to see that they fitted the tune, when I became conscious that some one was standing behind my chair. I turned round: it was Madelon, looking even more beautiful than in the morning. I uttered a cry of joy and surprise! "Haven't you been to Vespers?" "You looked so beautiful this morning; I was too agitated. . . . But I have spent every moment of my time on you." "What were you reading?" "See!" I handed her my verses, with their title: To Mademoiselle *Madelon Baron: Acrostic, for the festival of Maidens, to the air,* etc. Madelon blushed as she read. When she had finished, she gave me back the paper. "But . . . it is addressed to you." "I was not thinking . . ." She folded the sheet and put it away. I took her hands; I kissed her. She made but a feeble resistance. "I adore you!" I cried, as my lips left hers. "I don't believe it!" I kissed her twice and repeated: "I adore you." "No, I do not believe you!" "I adore you, you are dearer to me than life. . . . You will see for yourself in a few days . . ." "No!" (and she said it so charmingly!) "I do not believe you!" For each denial I kissed her upon the lips. . . . At last I took her in my arms and pressed her to me. . . . Then, releasing her, as her eyes grew heavy with desire, I ran to shut and bolt the top half of the door. I was back in the twinkling of an eye, and held all that beautiful body captive in a powerful embrace. "I adore you!" I repeated. "No, no, inconstant boy . . . you do not love me! . . ." Ah, the sweet languor of her voice! . . . Her lips scarcely sought to escape my kisses. She had never looked so beautiful; her breasts rose and fell to her repeated sighs. A deep sigh escaped me . . . Madelon's lips were pressed to mine . . . we neither moved nor spoke, absorbed in one another. . . . But the desire roused by Madelon's beauty, her caresses and her seductive attire was at its height. . . . If for a time I was motionless as in a trance, it was because my happiness was great enough; I wanted nothing more. But this state could not last; happiness is like a flash of lightning: one desire satisfied, another takes its place, to shine but for an instant. . . . For some days Madelon had filled my mind; her image was stamped on my imagination, her charms engaged my Muse. Pressed to my heart with tender vehemence, she murmured in a failing voice: "Let me go . . . if you would . . . seduce me." "Your lover swears eternal love for you!" I exclaimed, beside myself. . . . "Crown my vows, sweet divinity! Do not be afraid! In the very moment of triumph I become your slave for ever!" Madelon sighed and kissed me; only her dying modesty opposed me. . . . How happy I was!

Vespers at the Cordeliers only lasted three quarters of an hour, and we had to separate before people came back; yet in this short time Madelon *bis terna Venere fuit locupletata!* . . . I could not let her alone. But girls, more tender of their reputations than of their virtue, have the ears of a lynx on such occasions. The great clock gives twelve quick strokes before sounding the hour. Madelon slipped away directly she heard these, and when the great bell uttered its four strokes she was in her room. . . . She left me more in love with her than before. Possession has always made me more tenderly ardent than desire, and this kindly gift of nature has sometimes won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a heart to me. But what have I gained by it? The frustration of all my hopes. . .

After Madelon had gone, I sat down to meditate upon my happiness. . . . As for remorse, I felt none: "She is unwed, and I a bachelor," I thought, "and I will marry her. My parents will consider her a good match, and suitable from every point of view; she is charming and they will adore her; she loves me, and I shall be the happiest of men. . . ." Then turning round sadly upon myself: "Ah, if she could but wipe a disastrous passion from my heart!" I rejoiced in being bound; for I was still sufficiently honest to believe that in giving herself, Madelon had become my wife. My joy was too great to be shut up inside me; but I was not indiscreet. I have never confided even in my dearest friends a secret that concerned another. We shall see later that my confidences to Loiseau were never indiscreet.

I was still wrapped in pleasant dreams, when I heard Madelon's sweet voice break into song with an enchanting brilliance. She had been learning my acrostic, and her magic made my harsh verses soft and affecting. I was ravished; especially by these lines to which she had made her own additions:

> *And tell him that at last Timander's generous and ever more tender heart will teach him in pleasure's school to make his choice, and understand the object of his passion, for she must make him happy.*

In a flood of tenderness and admiration, I ran to the window which looked on to Madelon's, to show my rapture of gratitude. . . . Her only answer was to sing more feelingly than ever. . . . At that moment I heard some one come in. It was Toinette, and I ran to meet her, joy radiating from my face.

I had thought it was Mme Parangon and, for the first time, I was glad that it was some one else. "Ah, Toinette!" I exclaimed. "Good heavens, what is the matter with you?" "Nothing, nothing, dear Toinette; I am only very happy!" "Oh, that is splendid! . . . Have you had good news?" "Yes, yes." And I pulled out an old letter from my parents, and read of it what I wanted her to hear, for I felt I had gone rather far. "You are a good son, and care a great deal for your parents' approval!" she said. "I am going out, Toinette, but I shall not be long. Do what you have to do, and if you want to go to evensong, I will be back in time." "I would like to, but you are much too kind; do not put yourself out." I kissed her hand, which was not my custom with her, and I left the house, running like a madman, to exult in my happiness on the *Ile d'Amour.* The place was quite deserted, as few people go there in the piercing January cold, and I began to shout and sing, improvising as might a savage in moments of intense emotion; vomiting words expressive of my joy as a volcano vomits lava and burning stones. . . . I was happy! That was real happiness, not the sluggish indifference that passes for such; it burst the narrow confines of the soul, escaped and overflowed; the rapture of the senses at their flood broke through the barriers of the body, the dikes were down, the waters spread abroad. . . . It was a moment of ecstasy as intense as that divine expansion of our being which Nature joins to the act of propagation! . . . So does the Life principle after some vast convulsion in which difference is submerged, reform suns, comets, planets, the whole universe, from the superabundance of its energy. . . . I have felt happiness, I, a weak mortal! To be happy is to be a God, and how many poor mortals have never experienced this moment of divinity! When my hour strikes, and I see the axe lifted and ready to fall, I shall cry: "Strike, O Death! I have had my portion of happiness. Strike, O Death; the convict dying in his chains has been less unhappy than have I! Strike! for my days are fulfilled; I have received my portion of unhappiness! . . ." The flood of my emotion passed, and I became calmer. I was still walking, lost in meditation, savouring the aftermath of rapture, when I heard the bell for evensong and was recalled to Madeleine, who should show radiantly there . . . for the last time! . . . I ran home to keep my promise to Toinette. Directly she had gone, I locked the door, and went to see Madelon at her collecting. . . .

It was not mere fancy – she was transfigured; I have never seen anything so fair in Nature. Her cheeks were roses; her eyes shone . . . with happiness! . . . She came to me. Happily I was alone in the Chapel of the Virgin, and kissed the hand dropped by my side. "Ah, how I love you!" she murmured. "Pray that we be forgiven!" "No, I will give thanks," and my answer was rewarded with a sweet smile. . . . After evensong I waited for Madelon at the half door and she said, hardly pausing as she passed: "Sensitive, modest, witty, warm-hearted, right in all he does – that is my lover." She opened her door and I only had time to say before it shut, "And your husband."

I went in to work on my translation until seven o'clock, for work or study is a necessity to me: I could not bear when evening came *to have lost a day,* as Titus said; I liked to see some little progress, a small step forward every day; it was a spring of inner satisfaction. (Why, with this temperament, have I not reached higher?) . . . At seven, satisfied with myself as I had advanced a step or two in knowledge and in my work, I went out for a moment. I walked as far as Mlle Blonde's gate; then retraced my steps as though drawn by some secret power, and saw Madelon leaning over her door; no doubt she had heard me come out. I ran to her and seized her hand, kissing it in an excess of joy. "Ah, Monsieur Nicolas, we have . . ." "You have made a happy man, my idol . . . I was irresolute, I confess it;

but my heart is fixed, . . . now and for ever! . . ." "And mine," she answered, "is for ever yours." "Let us swear it by the one God!" I said, putting her hand upon my heart. "I swear it by the one God!" "And I by the one God! I swear that I will be faithful, constant and belong only to you. I worship as a goddess the giver of all my happiness." "How much I owe you! I cannot repent! . . . Sweet friend, I took your measure the first time I saw you, and said to myself: 'My love shall make his life happy, even against his will!' My respect you have always had; now my heart and my whole self belong to you. . . . But that is my step-mother calling. Goodbye!" . . . I left her, happier even than at the moment of surrender.

Instead of going indoors, I rushed to the Place Saint-Étienne, to vent in inarticulate cries emotions that were stifling me. Gaudet passing recognised my voice and came up to me: "What's the matter with you? What are you doing here all alone?" "Nothing," I answered. "I was too hot, and came out for some fresh air." "So did I. They are playing cards indoors. I do not play myself, but I watch the hand of my attorney's wife, leaning over the back of her chair; her breast, her arms, her dimpled hands. . . . She makes me grill. I have been to look for Marie, but she was busy, so I came here to get some air. . . . By the way, did you know that Breugnot has just arrived from Chatillon? He does nothing but shout for you." "Breugnot!" I exclaimed almost indignantly. But I moderated my tone: "I would . . . like to see him. . . . Let us go and find him." It was only two steps away, as his guardian lived in the square. Breugnot himself opened to our knock, and greeting me with delight, took us to his room, and told me that he had fallen in love at Chatillon with "the very pearl of girls," or at any rate "a nice piece of goods" (one of his pet expressions). Life in a little town had made him even duller: I found him twice as thick-headed, and twice as stupid. He asked me to write him some verses to conciliate his sister, whom he had not yet seen although they were living in the same house, and begged me to make them such as would win the good graces of the Canon at the same time. This venerable and pious old man, who for ten years had been the senior member of his Chapter, had voluntarily undertaken the guardianship of the brother and sister, left orphans while still under age. I promised to do what he asked, but I took my time about it. There are two poems written for him in my note-books. The first is a fable to bring about a reconciliation:

> *I have found the fire of fraternal love again on this auspicious day, and now rejoice in it. Ah, may my sister deign to accept the fruits of this pure and constant and tender affection, whose ecstatic rapture thrills all my senses, and to breathe in its incense on this New Year's day! The offering of a good brother must always be worthy of the sister.*
>
> *A fond lark chose the handsomest and gentlest of her kind for husband, and found him in all things compliant and affectionate. They lived together in calm and faithful love, but alas! this world is a world of sorrow!*
>
> *While she was watching tenderly over the twofold fruit of their sweet passion, the father, roaming afar to provide for his wife and children, fell into the toils of a murderous-handed hunter. Alert and anxious the tender lark awaited his return; but her heart longed in vain: for he was dead.*

"*The lark died of grief, and the two little ones were left orphans. But a benevolent rail brought them up and was a father to them and overwhelmed them with kindnesses.*" I then drew the moral: "*Children of such tender parents and wards of such a generous patron should love one another.*"

This production is dated the 15th of February. On the 3rd of March comes the second, to accompany a present Breugnot was giving to his sister. I make him say: "*That the affection which prompts him to offer this feeble mark of his esteem is as great as the present is small. It is a symbol of myself, and* *if it has but little value, dear sister, this is to remind you that the sign must never eclipse what it stands for. I give you so small a thing that it may not look as though I had finished my giving. I shall always be in your debt: a trifle can take nothing from what I owe you."* And then in amplification:

> *You recognise your brother in these tender phrases, and natural affection pledges you to make the fondest answer. . . . Please heaven, the reward of my assiduity may be to pass every moment of my time with you.*

Breugnot went back to Chatillon before the 11th of March, and I never saw him again.

We have seen how full was the end of January! An almost complete revolution had taken place within me; for I suppressed all thoughts of Mme Parangon until after the 11th of March. I find however that I gave a few moments to a poem in praise of Mlle Xérine Legueux; who was the exact opposite in figure of Mlle Maîne Blonde, but not in charm. It was begun on the 29th of January, but it was never finished; a note gives the reason: *"I began this in collaboration with Buisson, but he was promoted to a naval lieutenancy and left the town; I have left it as it was on the eve of his departure."* This note is dated the 25th of February.

From time to time unfortunate women would drift into the town, having been driven from the Capital or grown weary of it, and so departed to sow corruption elsewhere, and carry a twofold contagion to the Provinces. On the 24th of February Gaudet and Lemaire his colleague, a young Parisian newly arrived; Nombret, Annette's cousin and the brother of a charming sister, with certain other young men, took me with them in pursuit of one of these poor wretches. I only went through curiosity, but if I was lucky enough to feel no temptation, it was because to my mind we were not unlike a pack of dogs after a bitch. . . . Behaviour and language were all of a piece. . . . My ears were sullied by the disgusting conversation of Lemaire, who was far gone in vice and familiar with the bad parts of Paris. . . . What I wrote about this adventure expresses my horror of him; but it is so much corrected that it is unreadable.

Loving my dear Madelon with all my heart I still continued my *Séjour des Graces*, and gave her each canto as it was finished. The first, to Mlle Laloge, was finished on the 22nd. It is not without poetry; her sweet beauty casts its charm over my verses. After the invocation and the acrostic, quoted on pp. 712, 713 of the *Drame de la Vie,* I continue:

> *But come, Love, come, and paint your handiwork; trace the assembly of her moving charms for us; come, and with skilful brush picture to our eyes: her look of kindliness and gracious smile, her stately carriage and her tender gestures; her luxurious contour and her fascinating gait; the garden of her face blowing with new-born lily and carnation, with poppy and bright rose. The coral of her lip outshines vermilion; her skin shames the carnation and lily. Under too fine a tissue lies a treasury of charm, and this, in modesty's despite, the fashion hides not. . . .*

I say that "*Zephyr moves aside the veil and displays two mounds of snow; here love dwells, cradled by their soft movement.*" I extol the glossy whiteness of her skin. . . . Then I break into ecstasy at the sudden disclosure of fresh seductions which are described in detail, ingenuously, flatteringly. (My enthusiasm gave a charm to my indecencies, which prevented such modest girls as Émilie, Madelon, and Thérèse Lalois from being revolted by them.) I praise her leg and tiny foot, "*so slender as to be exquisitely formed as well as small. . . .*" In reviewing her charms, her clothing is described from head to foot. How could a young girl be otherwise than flattered by the impression made upon an ardent young man by her innocent coquetries, and the thousand details she thought had passed unnoticed? Her cap, her necklace, her collar, her laced ribbons; her dress, sweeping behind her or gathered gracefully up; petticoat, stockings, shoes, buckles – nothing escaped me, everything was appreciated. . . . I proceed to her qualities of mind and heart, the gifts of nature; her sweet ingenuousness, her natural gaiety, her equable temper, her gentle sensibility, and her temperate manner which deprived a rebuke of its sting even when she had to be severe. I praised her graceful elegance and lightness of foot, describing an occasion during the previous summer when I had seen her walking with friends, and the west wind at play had transformed her dress into something airy and ethereal.

Such were the lines of my songs in praise of Mme Hardouin's fair boarders, and of Mlle Hollier which I included with them. Mlle Émilie Laloge was a Parisian beauty, that is to say most delicately made; but she had in addition a brilliant complexion. Somewhat shorter than Mme Parangon, she was like her in the fine seriousness which followed upon her most charming smile and prevented any familiarity. For dazzling radiance she was the fairest flower I have ever seen in my life. Her brother, one of my friends, was the handsomest boy in town; I preferred him to Dhall or Pierrefitte. . . . But I must postpone the continuation of my *Séjour des Graces,* and all that concerns Émilie, until after the 3rd of May; it was during the summer that my love for her was crowned. I am now going to concentrate on Madelon.

The 11th of March was one of those crises in my life that have made tranquillity and happiness for ever strangers to me. Its memory still saddens me after thirty years; and working here in my bed, at half-past three on the 16th of February, 1784, I feel the blow as keenly as at first: if I were writing on the 11th of March, I could not hold the pen; anniversaries move me too violently. . . .

After the 20th of January I used to see Mlle Baron every evening; but never again did she come to me in the parlour on Sundays or holidays. For this I was compensated, however, by the sweet bridge which Maîne Blonde's closet and little garden made between us. For Madelon had shown Maîne her *Praise*, at the same time revealing that I was the author of the little poem, and in so doing had made her my devoted friend. The strange thing about *my wife's* nocturnal visits was that she never spoke, and that I let her play her chosen part of fairy, without giving any sign of recognition or uttering a word; and this seemed to please her. . . . We saw a great deal of each other during the carnival, but always in the presence of others. In our frequent conferences in the evening, during the dance, we decided that we would wait until my apprenticeship was finished if all went well; but that at the first sign of pregnancy, it should be terminated on some simple pretext and, so that she should not be exposed to gossip, I should give up my profession for other and more profitable work, which her brother would find for me in Dieppe. We never called each other anything but *dear little husband* and *dear little wife.* We shared all our thoughts and all our decisions; there was nothing left to hide the one from the other. I adored her: my gratitude was so intense that, to me, it seemed to be love. . . . But this was because Madelon was so fair, so fondly tender! . . . If a man is inconstant it is nearly always the fault of the woman; either because she is the first to cool, or because she neglects the arts of pleasing. . . . (*Here I stopped yesterday, stifled by my suffering; I could write no more. February 16th, 1784.*)

It was the 7th of March. I saw Madelon leaning over her door at midday before sitting down to table. She beckoned to me, and I hastened to her. "Dear friend" (and these, the last words she ever said to me, are sacred), "I think you should begin to prepare your parents; I want to be your wife. My brother in Dieppe has written in answer to my letter: 'If you marry the young man of whom you speak, I have a good position for your husband in the Shipping Offices. . . .' As certain of you and of your love as of your ability, I have asked him to keep the position open until after Easter, when I will give him a brother-in-law with whom he will be satisfied. . . . I mentioned your name, and described your appearance; above all I dwelt upon your character, your ability and good qualities; I know more about you than you imagine – from pretty Tiennette, the servant who was with Mme Parangon when you first arrived; from Mme Parangon herself, from M. Bourgoin, and from Toinette. . . . Write to your parents, dear friend, and let me see the letter before you send it, and I will add a few details which will not spoil it. I do not foresee any obstacles, do you?" "No, no, not the slightest!" and I kissed her hand, though thirty persons were in sight. "I will write at once," I added. "Goodbye!" cried Madelon. "There is Bardet come to tell you dinner is ready. Goodbye, dear friend!"

I left her with a heavy heart and so greatly troubled that I scarcely knew what I was doing. . . . I ate little. Twice Mme Parangon asked: "What is the matter with you?" but I only lowered my eyes without answering. On rising from table I went back to the door, but as Madelon was not to be seen and could not yet have finished dinner, I went up quickly to work. It occurred to me to write at once to my parents; so I took pen and paper and retired to my cubicle. I had not written more than one line, when Toinette came in: "Madame would like to speak to you." Never was any order of Colette inopportune, not even on this occasion, and I went downstairs even more quickly than I had come up.

"What is the matter, Monsieur Nicolas?" she asked. I was silent. . . . "I know everything . . . Madelon spoke to you just now?" "Yes, Madame." "She has told me all . . . I make no complaint. . . . But you were quick to forget the plan I confided to you!" "I, forget. . . . All your words are engraved upon my heart. . . . But there . . . I confess to you, whom I regard as a goddess rather than a woman. . . . I have become Madelon's husband. . . . My honour is pledged, and I would be unworthy the honour you intended, if . . ." "I understand and approve. . . . But was it necessary? . . . I will not waste time in fruitless reproach: there is only one way in which you can make yourself an honest man; you must take it, and I will help you as I would help a brother. . . . Monsieur Nicolas, at this moment I see clearly, as I have seen before, that virtue hangs but upon a thread! We cannot permit ourselves the slightest deviation from it, if we would escape falling headlong into the most. . . . Leave me. . . . I am going to look after your interests."

I withdrew even more agitated than after my conversation with Madelon. I was in an incredible state: tortured, yet content; apprehensive, remorseful, yet unable to repent. . . I suffered cruelly, yet would not have been delivered from my torment. The time for writing to my parents had been used up; my work was urgent and I did not leave it until eight o'clock.

After supper Mme Parangon went out. I did not see Madelon nor any of her sisters. A sort of shyness prevented me from asking news of her from Marote the chambermaid. My mind was full of what Mme Parangon had said; it worried me; I imagined that she was with Mme Baron. I was sure that Madelon would come to me that night, as on nearly every night since the 27th of January, the day on which I had given her my *Praise* of herself and her sister. . . . I wanted to go indoors to write my letter, yet I could not tear myself away from the door; at the slightest noise I went back to it, burning to see Madelon . . . whom I was never to see again! . . . I went to the window on the press-room staircase from which Madelon's room was visible: there was a light in it, but the curtains were so tightly drawn that I could only see a movement as of shadows.

Just then, all the household came in. I would have given half my life to see Madelon just for a moment, to tell her that Mme Parangon agreed to our marriage. I went to bed, hoping soon to hear her, and did not sleep. . . . Vain waiting! My heart was torn with anxiety, a torture I have too often suffered since! . . . Towards morning I had a dream, which I find described in Latin in my *Quartus Codex* (I was not sufficiently myself to write in verse: verse is for the exalted moods of pleasure; it is not serious enough for pain). I thought I saw Maîne Blonde upon a tree beckoning me to go with her. I was running towards her when I saw Madelon fall from the tree, and immediately her two sisters, Manon and Berdon, approached in mourning and dissolved in tears. I rushed to the spot where Madelon had just fallen; she had disappeared. . . . I cried aloud. . . . Berdon wanted to send me away, but Manon asked pardon for me on her knees. . . . I searched for Madelon weeping . . . I found myself in the Sacy country, and thought: "How can Madelon have got here with her sisters? . . ." I woke in a state of exhausting anxiety. . . . "It was all a dream," I said to myself. "Ah, what a relief that it was only a dream!" But it was real!

On the following day, the 8th, no one spoke to me during the morning. At midday I went to the door to see Madelon. Marote came out, running. I went nearer; I could see no one in the shop. The neighbours were watching me; I looked so sad, they thought I knew. Mme Parangon was not at supper. I went to the door on leaving table, and saw Manon Baron: I was on the point of joining her to go in with her and get news, when she made me a sign not to come. Shy by nature, I was abashed and went indoors again; but any suspicions I had were far from the truth. I had meant to write my letter, but it occurred to me to wait until I had spoken to Mme Parangon. I had walked a hundred times up and down the shop and in front of the door, before the household returned: my faculties were benumbed; I asked myself why Madelon was not to be seen, and could find no answer to my question. Back in my little room, I stared at her window: the curtains were as closely drawn as on the evening before, and shadows came and went and moved about. I no longer wonder at premonitions and superstition; they are born of that state of stupor which is the forerunner of great misfortunes.

On the 9th, Toinette spoke to me when I came down in the morning: "Mademoiselle Baron has been very ill for two days." "Ah, gracious heavens! Ill!" and I ran out without listening to Toinette, who would have stopped me. When Mme Baron saw me enter, she came up to me and took both my hands: "Who is ill, Madame?" I asked. "You shall be told, but you cannot see the invalid." "Ah, why, Madame?" "She is not in her right mind." "Not in her right mind!" "No." "Which of them is ill?" "They will tell you . . . I have asked Madame Parangon to tell you." "Ah, it is Madelon! It is my friend!" "Be calm! And go now. I will see that you have news." I went away slowly, my hand to my head, my eyes wet with tears; I hid my tears from Mademoiselle Prudhot by lowering my hand, and when I reached our door, I rushed into the house. . . .

Madame Parangon was in the parlour; but she was not alone, so I bowed deeply without speaking. I ran up to work. . . . I worked at a speed which was in the nature of a prodigy! All my tempestuous agitation found vent in my fingers. Bourgoin, the foreman, watched me without speaking; sweat was dropping from every hair. "You will kill yourself," he said at last. "There is plenty of time!" "Plenty of time! It is finished!" I did not know what I was saying.

When the dinner hour arrived, I went downstairs. I was undone. I hurried to Madelon's door. "She is lying in her sisters' arms," Marote told me. "She is quieter now. . . . She rests . . . or is going to rest. . . . Oh, my dear mistress! . . ." "Do not say her name!" I said, putting my hand over her mouth. Marote was frightened; she thought I was mad. She went and told Mme Baron. "Cannot I see her, if necessary without being seen?" I asked the latter. "No, no! Not yet." I left the house without a word.

Madame Parangon was alone when I went back through the parlour, and said to me: "She is a little better." I seized her hand: "You have never said anything but kind and comforting things to me! You are an angel! . . . And I . . . Ah, I can never repay what I owe you! . . ." I fled to the press-room as I finished speaking. M. Parangon came in: "The work will never be done. Look at him!" "It is done." "By whom?" "By him: this morning he did a day's work in three hours." I heard this conversation, and said: "I may be in trouble, but my work shall not suffer." And I set to on something else, keeping up the same pace as in the morning. M. Parangon took away the proof, but did not ask me to read it with him.

At eight o'clock I flew again to Madelon's door. Finding no one in the shop, I went upstairs. I saw her, stretched upon her bed: her black tumbled curls concealed her forehead. She was sleeping, or she was unconscious, or she was dead. . . . Mme Baron and her sisters, who had done all the nursing, came to me distressed. I was allowed to look at her, but they prevented me from going nearer. "Ah, it is she, it is she!" I said to them, and fell on my knees lifting my eyes to heaven: "O God, save her! And grant me tears!" "We will tell her how deeply you have felt this," said Mme Baron, "and . . . she will thank you." She swallowed her tears and controlled the rising sobs; Berdon and Manon looked at me in silent astonishment and pity. "Ah, you have unloosed my heart!" I exclaimed. "It was stifling me; I am going to weep!" I burst into tears. . . . My rending sobs forced me to retreat, and I was not allowed to go upstairs again; nor would I have been permitted to see her at all if my visit could have been prevented: Marote had only gone out for a moment.

I could not sleep; frightful dreams disturbed my rest. . . . At three o'clock in the morning I woke from a drowsy stupor: I was suffocating; something was pressing on me! . . . It was a woman, her face livid, her forehead shadowed by black hair. . . . It was Madelon! . . . I cried out! I threw my arms round her. . . . I strained her to my heart. . . . I staggered and fell near the window in the roof. . . . Alas, alas! Was it the illusion of a fevered imagination? Or . . . had Maîne Blonde come in pity to break the news of my misfortune to me gently? . . . I opened the window which looked on to that of my wife . . . the window from which I had seen her on that day, that happy day, when I had heard her singing:

*Oh for an undissembling heart. . . .*

There was a light in her room: the shadows moved hither and thither in extreme agitation and lugubrious silence. . . . I could not go out: I went back to bed. My heavy eyelids drooped; I dozed; but only to hear these terrible words: *Farewell! . . . Farewell! . . . Farewell! . . . You will never see me again.* It was the voice of the eldest Mlle Baron, of my wife. . . . I started awake, and jumped out of bed; I dressed. Day was breaking, and I remained some time by the window. There were no lights in Mlle Baron's house; everything looked so peaceful that a ray of hope followed my terror. It grew lighter, and I set to work.

Until midday no one spoke to me. I had had no breakfast and went downstairs at dinner-time; I did not even go to the door as on the preceding days; nothing impelled me thither. We dined in a sad silence, for Madelon was our nearest neighbour, and equally beloved by both sexes: by Mme Parangon – even by M. Parangon, who was sparing of affection and friendship. On leaving the table, I went to the door; timidly I advanced my head; finally I looked out. The Barons' door was shut. I stood motionless; but the truth had not yet dawned on me. I re-entered the house, and went up to work; but my eyes were arrested by the sight of Madelon's window, which was a little open, and I remained leaning on the banisters lost in contemplation. Mme Parangon crossed the courtyard without noticing me; I seemed to see tears falling from her eyes, and shuddered! . . . But I thought it was my fancy. I went on upstairs and worked until eight o'clock. We ate our supper sadly; I was foredone with fatigue and sleep.

As we left the table I said to Mme Parangon: "Madame, do you think she is a little better?" "No." "Ah Heavens!" "You are not well: go and rest. I am going to her now, for your sake and for my own. . . . It will be better than if you went." I hesitated. "I ask you to do this." I had nothing to answer. I went up to my cubicle, and a sleep like death dulled my senses until six o'clock next morning.

It was Sunday, the 11th of March! I felt less suffocated by agitation as I dressed but I was more weighed down with dejection. However, I was ingenious in finding arguments to reassure myself: "If they despaired of her life, what reason could they have for not letting me see her? . . . *That will* *be better*. . . . That is to say, more becoming; they are afraid of gossip or exposure, or lest she should feel ashamed of what she may have said in delirium." This argument spread a soothing balm upon my heart. . . . At the same instant the plaintive note of a bell struck upon my ear: "Some poor soul has ceased to live," I thought to myself, "and has just fallen into the bottomless abyss of eternity!" I went downstairs and looked for some one to question. Toinette avoided me; Mme Parangon was in bed; Bardet had just gone out, and Tourangeot had not come in. Not finding anyone to speak to in the house, I went out. Manon Prudhot was at her door, but retreated when she saw me; however, that was her usual way with me now. Annette came out of the Barons' house: she saw me, and hurried past. Little Marianne Roullot, scarcely more than a child, Maîne Blonde and her neighbour, the beautiful Bourdignon, all had tears in their eyes. . . . I decided to cross the road. Two paces from the house I saw Tourangeot in the *Cour du Palais*; he was coming out of a shop where he sometimes indulged in orgies. He looked less the Tartar than usual as he came up to me: "I am so sorry!" he said, taking my hand. "She died yesterday at three o'clock in the morning. . . . It seems impossible to believe it. . . . but she is going to be buried to-day. . . ." "Dead! Who is dead?" I exclaimed, turning pale. He did not answer, but pointed to Madelon's door, and remained some moments in this attitude (as far as I remember). I do not know what happened to him: I have no idea what happened to myself. He left me, or I left him. . . . But I know that I got to the *Porte du Pont*; that I went on as far as the half-ruined Church of Saint-Gervais (where I had said goodbye to Marguerite!), and that I sat under the ruined archway; that I uttered lamentable cries, heard only by the frightened birds. . . . Reader! It is the 11th of March, 1753, and the wound that I received on it will never heal. . . . It was ten o'clock in the morning when I reached Saint Gervais; I stayed there, despair alternating with utter prostration, until four o'clock in the afternoon, when tenderness came to soften my grief, and tears took the place of cries. I felt that I had lost everything; but towards three o'clock an idea brought great comfort to my mind (alas, I have had other griefs and found no comforter!),* and my heart melted as it found rest in Mme Parangon's arms. My grief lost its bitterness, and I took out my third note-book; for I wanted to consecrate my despair and Madelon's memory in verse. . . . But either my tears effaced the words as I wrote them, or my ideas were too disordered to cohere. I began to cry aloud again at the thought: "Madelon will never read these verses!" Alternately I wept and wrote; I wept, and when my tears dried up I wrote. . . . Now after forty-one years, I print these mournful stanzas from the very book in which they were composed, and the writing is blurred with tears; as I rest my hand where my hand rested, a tremor shakes me, and again the fountains are unloosed. For this scrap of paper has a secret virtue, and I live those days of anguish over again; I am with her who was the cause of them, and with her who brought some comfort to my dejected heart. . . . Ah, I have lost them both! I look at the page which holds them, this page written under the arch of a ruined church. . . . My eyes cling to it; I read the name of Madelon Baron; imagination takes me back to those days, those regretted days of my youth, to remind me of all that I have lost; then leads me back again through all that I have suffered since, from perfidy, treachery, ingratitude, slander, injustice, abominable wickedness and foulest baseness. Even my own family rebel against me (and this I did not deserve, for I was always an obedient son).

*I was wrong: I have C$^{en}$ Arthaud.

Oh, how my heart swells at this sad review! Oh, how I weep! But my tears have lost their bitterness: old griefs have mellowed them; they are a soothing unction to the stiffening sinews of my mind, making them flexible and infusing some energy into my withered heart. . . .

My *Stanzas* on the death of Madelon are sacred; and although the rhythm, borrowed from Régnier, may not be agreeable, I will not in any way change them. It is my farewell to my first wife, to the only woman in the town who could have made me happy.

> *Alas, great God, that Philis should be no more! I have lost her in the springtime of her age, and with immoderate lamentation ask of Destiny:* What has become of her?
>
> *Come now, inexorable death, unwitting of half measures, for the blow that killed her shall not frighten me, nor your sword if it makes me* What she is now.
>
> *Death, it is through you that the for ever vanished Philis moves me to cry distractedly aloud:* What is she now?
>
> *Ah, Nature, you are dumb! But the bewildered echo eternally repeats my own complaint:* O places where we used to meet, what has become of her?
>
> *O Philis, you are no more, and the tomb will soon hide for ever all that fair wealth it has already claimed from me, ay, and shall make me also in a little time* what she is now!

I wept as I wrote these stanzas; I weep as I re-read them. They have the same effect on me now as then. The title, *"A Lament upon the Death of Mademoiselle Madelon Baron,"* was inserted later; the terminal note was added later yet: *Hos Versiculos, die sepulturæ dominica scripsi lugendo, ad fanum Sangervasii extra muros, eadem sub camera, subter qua æternum Vale Margaritæ Paridi olim dixeram!* . . . It is dated, *Die 11$^{a}$ Martii, hora tertia serotina.* I think that both title and note were added on the 16th of the following August, we shall see in what connection when the time comes.

My suffering was the first of its kind that I had ever felt: it was the grief of a man who loses his wife, and with her the prospect of a career which she would have made easy, smooth, and prosperous. (Madame Parangon was aware of this, and it had decided her to give me her support towards the end.) She was a pretty girl whom I had made a mother . . . and with her death a part of myself died also. . . . Fairylike, she had appeared to rescue me from youth's aberrations . . . to save me from the horror of being Jeanneton's lover by taking her place. . . . She had met her death on her way to give me happiness only three days before. She had fallen from the ladder, which she had not placed securely, on the evening of that last and so affecting interview when our hearts and minds were in such perfect communion. I did not know the cause of her illness at the time; and Gaudet d'Arras (with friendly intentions doubtless) poured poisonous slanders into my ear; and instilled a hideous suspicion, to which I give utterance in my description of Manon's death in the *Paysan Perverti*. . . . Ah, that never came from Mme Parangon! Now I understand why I could not see her, why I was not allowed to receive a last farewell from my wife, who would have informed me that I was a father. Mme Parangon told me later and the reason for her action will be appreciated.

After I had finished my poem, I began again to cry and lament; my suffering was inconceivable. It was as though I had a premonition, contrary to all appearance as things then stood with me, that my loss was irreparable. . . . At the height of my grief, I heard a woman's footstep. I hushed my cries and pulled myself together. Some one was coming: I raised my eyes, and saw . . . Catherine Servigné. . . . She had been to inspect one of her father's vineyards quite close to the church and had heard me. She saw that I was weeping, and though she did not know why, she respected my grief, and retreated without a word. But her appearance took my mind off my sorrows, and a quarter of an hour later I got to my feet and left the archway, my knees trembling so that I could scarcely stand. I paused to gaze over the churchyard, or rather the sainfoin which was so called; for it was grown for cutting, and there was hardly a burial there in forty years. I caught sight of the two sisters, Edmée and Catherine, in mourning, and bowed to them. They joined me. "You are in mourning!" I exclaimed. "Yes, for my poor brother, who has died without leaving any children. It will be two years this autumn since you met him with us at Vaux." And as she spoke Catherine pointed to the village of Vaux, which could be seen on the other side of the river. . . . My heart swelled with a multitude of memories, and I began to weep again. "Ah, death, death!" I exclaimed. "He steals away everyone but me!" "Comfort Edmée a little," said Catherine, "for she loved her brother dearly!" "I comfort her! . . . Oh, let us weep together, my poor Edmée; yes, let us weep, let us weep . . . for those who are no more!" Tears poured down my cheeks, and Edmée's fell like great pearls, with little contractions of her pretty face which made mine flow the quicker. Catherine wept with us. All three of us walked silently, hand in hand, weeping our fill. . . . (O Almighty God, how exquisite are tears shed in the company of sincere kind-hearted people! I know of none such now to join their tears to mine; but no doubt they still exist. . . .)

Day was falling as we reached the town, and I was fasting. (Dear wife, I kept your funeral day with tears, with fasting and with anguish, as a man should who, in losing you, lost all his happiness.) I left the two sisters at the postern of *Saint-Pèlerin,* and went home by the *Place Saint-Étienne,* the *Rue Notre-Dame,* and the outer court of the Cordeliers, entering the house by the wetting-room door. Toinette saw me and ran to meet me: "Madame is very anxious! No one has seen you all day . . . Tourangeot is so imprudent! . . ." She held my hands. Mme Parangon came out of the parlour: "Come and sit with me," she said; and we went to the upper room where a fire had been lighted. We sat down. "Have you had dinner?" "Oh, I . . . I do not remember . . ." "No." "I do not think so. But I am not hungry." She rang the bell, and Toinette ran up with some soup. Mme Parangon tried to distract my mind with a kindness which could not fail of its effect. I forced myself to reply to her solicitous attentions, and ate something.

I was beginning to get calmer, when I heard the funeral chant . . . I flew to the window. Mme Parangon took me round the waist and pulled me away. I gave in; but I threw myself face downwards on the floor, and did not move until I could no longer hear it. . . . What would I not have given to be alone! But Mme Parangon made me sit down again by the fire and, holding my hands, spoke to me as though I were her brother. We began to weep together, and thereafter used no other language. Never, never was there a woman who could comfort as she could! Her hands, and sometimes her eyes, spoke to me; and twice I pressed the hand I held in mine. . . . Eight o'clock struck. We went down into the parlour. Toinette forced me to take some soup as I could not eat. M. Parangon came in, and glanced at me almost tenderly, and I heard him say to Bourgoin: "I doubt if he will ever be happy after this!" The foreman was fond of me although I was his rival; for he had been unsuccessful with Madelon, from whom one day he had nearly managed to snatch some verses which I had just given her. But she proved that it is not easy to take from the most fragile girl something she means to keep. He showed the most kindly concern for me: "You were very happy," he said, "and you deserved it, which is not always the case."

What a night of anguish followed this terrible day! Yet it was soothed by the kindness of Mme Parangon, my tutelary goddess; by my meeting with dear Edmée; by Toinette's eagerness to minister to me: I was surrounded by kind faces and pure hearts. . . . Ah God! How many nights of torment have I since passed with none to comfort me! The year 1757, still more calamitous, deprived me of the guardian angel sent to enlighten and to guide me through my imprudent youth. . . . I had the perfect friend, I had Loiseau! But now I am alone, save for the stern and terrible angel appointed to punish my sins. . . .

Next day I found Toinette by my bed when I awoke. "You are to rest," she said. "It is Madame's wish." "Dear Toinette. . . . Tell . . . her whom we all respect, how much I feel her goodness and all your care! You are good, Toinette, dear girl," I added, "just as good as you are pretty. Have you ever known such a mistress?" "Oh, no, indeed!" she said with emotion. When she had left me I went downstairs and began to work, but I had little strength. "There is nothing urgent," said Bourgoin. "Go and rest." I continued to work in silence. His cousin Manon made some pretext for coming upstairs; but really she came on behalf of Mme Parangon, who dared not come herself, and of Gaudet d'Arras, who did not want to appear so early; and for her own satisfaction also, for she was fond of me. She approached my case: "You should be in bed." "No, no," I answered, and pressed her hand to my heart. The tears came to my eyes, and she could not restrain her own (for who had not loved Madelon?). She retreated, incapable of saying more.

A quarter of an hour later, Gaudet d'Arras came in. I was alone in the press room save for the foreman (and he had just gone downstairs with his cousin), as the workmen were observing Monday in their usual fashion. . . . He came to me with open arms, exclaiming: "My dear, dear friend! Ah, how grieved I am for you! . . . One of her sisters told me in front of that saintly step-mother (for it is saintly to be such an exceedingly good step-mother) that your marriage was all arranged! . . . It is a real loss; for apart from material advantages she combined a fine character with beauty and a tender heart. . . . She loved you beyond belief! You have indeed lost a wife! . . . Weep for her! . . . Who could be so barbarous as to grudge your tears?" But I did not weep: the tide of my grief was arrested at its full; I felt joy on hearing Madelon praised and pleasure in the thought of having been so dearly loved! This pure, fine tribute to my sweetheart and my wife was balm to me, and I waited open-mouthed for more, my eyes fixed on Gaudet's. But he resumed, doubtless misunderstanding my silence: "You have lost your mistress, but not your friends – of either sex, for I know you have them in both!" "Oh, don't seek to comfort me," I exclaimed. "Praise her, but do not comfort me! You soothed my pain by praising her; why must you bring it back again?" "Dear friend," he said, pressing my hand, "there is at least one woman you dare not grieve!" He spoke with such decision that his words impressed me. . . .

At this moment Manon Bourgoin joined us. Gaudet d'Arras took her in his arms and pressed her to his heart. "His grief has made me feel how much I love you, Sweetheart," he said. "I shall profit by it, if he does not suffer too much." "Dear people!" "It was you who gave us our happiness! Oh my dear, his anguish is terribly sharp; he showed it in a phrase just now that came from the bottom of the heart: *Praise her*, he said, *but do not comfort me!* My dear Nicolas," he added, "come down with us; Madame

Parangon is alone, her husband has just gone out. . . ." Each took a hand, they dressed me like a child, and led me downstairs. We went into the upper room, where all four of us sat down. I was by Mme Parangon. Gaudet d'Arras gave us the latest news; and then, coming to what he had no doubt meant all along to relate, he lowered his voice: "We must not believe everything we hear; slander is all too common. Even the sweet girl whose loss we three feel almost as keenly as Nicolas, does not escape it in the tomb. They are saying her mortal illness was caused by shock; she was with Leroy, the attorney's clerk, when the notary's clerk Deschamps came in suddenly and saw them . . . in a position . . . it is a foul lie! And I want no better proof of it than her affection for our friend here. . . ." I listened horrified to this abominable speech, even though I did not know then that Madelon had met her death in coming to me! . . . Mme Parangon's manner expressed her disapproval, and Manon put her hand over her lover's mouth. . . . Yet, false as it was, this horrible tale took something from the pure abandonment of my grief and caused a subtle change in its character, although I was not aware of it. Gaudet d'Arras, who had not however invented the tale, had an extraordinary understanding of human nature. From that moment I was more ready to accept comfort from Mme Parangon. . . . D'Arras resumed: "Two other causes are suggested: for having mentioned the first and most serious, I must also speak of the others. They say that the young lady was . . . pregnant by our friend here (this will not affect him as he knows the truth), injured herself, and died of it. . . . And finally, assuming the truth of this last version, they say that she surprised our friend in the very act with a most hideous creature, just when she was counting on him; and that, when she reproached him somewhat too haughtily, he retaliated with a story to her discredit. Then, realising that she could not bend him as she had hoped, she fell into despair and . . . poisoned herself." "Great God!" I exclaimed, beside myself, "in Thy name I curse this execrable town for ever, this infamous infanticide that rends its own children in pieces! This Medea! May it be consigned to humanity's undying hatred. . . ." I had risen; all three were trembling, and Gaudet d'Arras, seeing that he had gone too far and that my rage might turn against himself, tried to smooth over what he had said by praising the dead girl in the highest terms. But it was Mme Parangon who finally disposed of the matter: "I know the truth," she said. "Evil-minded people have distorted the facts; and the part played by Madelon in the incident of the ugly girl was sublime." Gaudet d'Arras lowered his eyes. . . . I have repeated his words to give some idea of the spitefulness of my fellow townsmen; they were on the whole the vilest and most ruthless of backbiters, and this is one of my reasons for despising them. They knew the real cause of Madelon's death: I cannot doubt that; so the first story was an atrocious slander, the second was a distortion, and the third had not the least foundation. Of whom could Madelon have been jealous? Had she shown any signs of jealousy in delirium? Ah, she had no cause for jealousy save of Mme Parangon, and that gave her no pain! But I was condemned to live in a state of cruel uncertainty until that moment when the veil was rent! It was a horrible torment, but not so horrible as some I have experienced.

In the evening, after supper, I found myself alone with Mme Parangon. . . . What grief would not have been soothed by her presence? She talked to me simply and sincerely; she reminded me of her plan, but with that feminine delicacy which can so present a consoling idea as not to wound the most irritable susceptibilities. I was sensible of her goodness. . . . And having touched on this subject, she talked of nothing but Madelon; she sang her praises, and related a thousand little things my sweetheart had confided to her relative to myself during the last week of her life, that is to say, after she no longer had any doubt but that she was pregnant. She alluded to Jeanneton in passing, but only to dwell on the devotion and generosity of Madelon's motives; motives which had also determined her to accept my verses, knowing that time would purge me of obscenity. She defended her honour and her reputation firmly and with assurance; she vindicated her as though she were still alive, affirming that she had always respected her and, since she had had her entire confidence, had also admired her. She added these weighty words, well worthy of the most virtuous and reasonable of women: "When a man has loved a woman, Monsieur Nicolas, he should keep her memory and reputation holy and be her knight to defend its purity. If any one tarnishes the good fame of a woman whom love made one with you, your innermost self is invaded, befouled and degraded; the interests, conduct and virtue of those who have loved each other are for ever inseparable. . . ." I listened enraptured. "It shall be so, Madame," I said rising and holding up my hand to heaven, "I swear it!" "You are still simple of heart and good," she said with a tender smile. "Keep so for a long time yet. . . . When you lose that simple goodness, you will fall into vice and misery. . . . (What a crime," she murmured, "to have brought him to the town! It was my doing; shall I perhaps be punished for it?) But no," she added, turning to me again, "you would never of your own will become . . . what I fear for you. . . . Go now and rest . . . I do not regard you as an ordinary young man; I forgive much in you, and talk to you as to a brother. . . . I was pleased with the vow you made just now. . . . If you pain me at times, you make up for it at others. . . . Our fathers were friends in their youth, and still are so: some day we too shall be old friends. . . . Oh, why can I not make time, swift as it is, go yet more swiftly! . . ."

Tears were coursing down my cheeks; but tell me, Reader, was not this woman worthy of them?* Consider my insignificance throughout this *anatomy of myself.* What there may be of good in my books does not belong to me; it was given me by these men and women: my mother and father, Antoine Foudriat, Jeannette, Madelon and, above all, Mme Parangon, my guide and shaper in Auxerre. And you will see the value I set upon her; you will know all my abominable wickedness. But you will know also how she was avenged by my unhappiness in surviving her; by all the misery I am to experience: despised and discredited, poor even to the lack of bare necessities, in a word, stripped of everything save courage! You will get to know others to whom I owe what is left to me. Alas, a mere planet, I can only reflect the light of those radiant stars – and extinguish them!

I left Mme Parangon, strengthened by her last words. The mind grown calmer, my body yielded itself to sleep, and I passed an untroubled night.

Such is the full and circumstantial narrative of a loss, which was to be made irreparable by one that followed it. Madelon's death changed the course of my life. At first I felt my misfortune keenly. But Gaudet d'Arras's gossip broke its first force, and, far more efficacious, my talks with Mme Parangon took the bitterness from my grief. But alas, everything was to turn against me! Colette, most virtuous of women, helped me as much as she could, until she saw that she was in danger of ruining herself and me:

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*The enthusiasm of Monsieur Nicolas for Colette was not without justification. Her contemporaries bore independent witness to the charm and the goodness of Madame Fournier. [Ed.]

then she deserted me; or rather it was as though she said to some woman who was free: "He is in danger! Save him – even if it means keeping him for yourself!" Sublime in thought and action, Mme Parangon stood alone and above all other women I have ever met. . . . But I did not know enough at that time to realise the full excellence of her conduct and of the heart which dictated it. Gaudet d'Arras, on the other hand, *profaned* my grief as much as he could: not that he did not realise its possible advantages, for he would say sometimes: "If you were a fool, like my little cousin, I would leave you to your *precious* grief (as you consider it) to keep you straight; but you have no need for that sort of thing: all that a balanced mind needs for ethics and religion is reciprocity; and you have such a mind, in spite of vigorous passions. . . ." That was all very fine and good, but it was too much for me; although in thinking it over since, I realise that his idea was sound. I will go further: in the existing circumstances, and to judge not by reason but after the event, Mme Parangon's consolations were harmful to me. I made it a duty to fall in with her plans, and counted on Mlle Fanchette instead of paying my addresses to Berdon, as was expected by Mme Baron's household, and thus obtaining all the worldly advantages of a marriage with Madelon. Indeed they were so certain of me that Berdon, although a proud girl, made definite advances to me. . . . But as I was to be, as I have always been, the plaything of Fate, I held myself coldly aloof, and devoted myself absolutely to fulfilling the wishes of my good fairy. Whether prudent or foolish, ill or well-behaved, I did nothing at this time but what was detrimental to my prospects. I had almost forgotten Madelon, when common politeness demanded that I should visit the sisters. One evening they sounded me, by obscure allusions to the great number of verses I had written to their sister; but I thought I detected an ill-natured curiosity, and pretended not to understand. . . . It was the behaviour of a fool, for Berdon was charming, even to my eyes.

Mme Parangon made it a principle never to follow up an intimate talk with me; so she left me rather too much to myself. Therefore I fell back on Gaudet d'Arras and Gaudet; and the acquaintances I had made through Buisson, who were of his kind. I sought distraction; distraction led to license; and I returned to my plan of triumphing over the virtue of my benefactress. Three weeks after the death of my friend, my true friend as well as my mistress (30th of March), I had a dream of which Annette was the subject:

> *I held her in my arms, and we climbed a long, rough stairway together. She thrilled and trembled with the shame and emotion which my burning passion brought to her: but my loving tenderness reassured her and calmed a needless terror. My mouth grew fast to hers and my hand glided beneath her skirt in search of pure felicity. Lilies were blowing on her lovely breast, and roses had stained buds for its adornment. Our twin souls mingled in a thousand and a thousand pleasant sighs, and our united . . . vibrated to our pleasure.*

The rest of the poem describes the act of possession. I had sufficient decency not to send it to the girl: but through my natural inconsequence Annette gained nothing by this. Colombat, her betrothed, had a pleasant dream about her; he mentioned his good luck to me, and I gave him a copy of my dream, which he sent to his young mistress as his own, in the form in which it appears in the *Drame de la Vie,* p. 213. He was well scolded by her mother! And Annette, who suspected me of being the author, was very cold to me ever after. . . . Let no one be indignant with me for forgetting Madelon so quickly: I have paid dearly for it. Never for a moment can I escape from remorse! . . .

On the 30th of April I had a ravishing dream about the lovely Laloge, which revived all my old fondness for her. (It is quoted in the *Drame de la Vie*, p. 1214.) At the same time I sent her some old verses, which she had either never had or which I had revised following her words to me on the 20th of August, 1752. These occur in the *Drame* on p. 1206 in the form in which they were presented. In passing, the first lines of my *Praise* of Madelon as finally revised are quoted in the same work, p. 707; and also (on pp. 1205 and 1206, in two parts) some lines I sent to her before she had granted me her favours, describing my loneliness and the drain on my vitality, which probably led to her generous decision to sacrifice herself in order to preserve my health. On the 3rd of May a passing inclination produced the trifle to Mlle Tartre, found on p. 1215. On the 27th a recrudescence of my passion for Mme Parangon was expressed in unbridled verse (see the same page and the two following ones). This was shown to no one; even Madelon would never have seen it, or rather I should never have written it if she had been alive. . . . On re-reading this spate of rabid passion in 1756, I added the following note in my third exercise book: *Hi pessimi versus ardoris cupidinisve rabiem pro adoranda hera Coletta exprimunt. . . . Invitus invitam reliqui, ad veniendum Parisiis; ubi mortem animi virtutisque patior!* . . . Alas, this frenzied outpouring was the precursor of a storm which for long had been preparing! My heart was empty, as I had decided to give Edmée and Catherine to my cousins Mairat, and the crisis would have arrived much sooner than it did, but for one of those exquisite adventures which only seem to happen to me.

Returning to Émilie Laloge, Bardet delivered my last verses to her with the older ones. And here I may state that one of the chief reasons why I so soon forgot Madelon was that Émilie was in everything her equal: she was young and beautiful, well-bred and well-to-do and devoted. . . . But apart from the fact that I could not seriously wish to set up a new rival to Mlle Fanchette, Émilie could never belong to me. She was engaged against her will to a rich and influential old codger, who had furthered the ambition of her despotic family on condition that she was given to him. . . . All Émilie had been able to obtain was two years' respite, in which to go, not to the mountains, but to the town, to mourn for her virginity. . . . I will return to my story where I left it on page 292.

An incident on the Ile d'Amour during the preceding summer had been turned to account in my Praise of Émilie Laloge, and had provided me with an agreeable episode. I was reading attentively under some poplars, when the fair denizens of the *Séjour des Grâces* arrived on the island with their governess. Laloge and her two most attractive friends, Lalois and Dugravier, who knew me, saw me in my retreat and, approaching softly, sat down behind me without my noticing them. I had several books with me as I am a very quick reader, and they took one which they found on the grassy bank a little above me; Mlle Laloge, in the middle, held it (it was Mme de Villedieu's *Illustre Parisienne*), and they read for about an hour. . . . I was reading *Mademoiselle de Tournon et le Comte de Varambon,* and was quite carried away by it. At last I exclaimed: "Ah, how I could have loved her!" The three Graces smiled. They were reading to themselves, and not turning over until all had finished the page. A Villedieu romance was interesting enough reading for young Jansenists brought up on the driest books, and they devoured it! But carried away by some incident, the youngest (Dugravier) let fall a little *Ah!* which drew my attention to the three beauties. What a pleasant surprise! But I pretended not to have seen them, and taking out my second note-book, opened it at the verses (already quoted) written to *Émilie* on the 20th of the preceding

August, and read them with intense feeling; and then went on to those on Thérèse Lalois's first Communion. The three Graces began to whisper, and I turned round. "I was thinking of you, Mesdemoiselles; but take no notice of me. I should be most unhappy if I interfered with your amusements." They continued the story to the end without answering, and then gave me back the volume, which I kissed where Émilie had touched it. "This one is more interesting still," I said, showing her the title of *Mademoiselle de Tournon*. "If you would like to read it, you will always find me here on Sundays and holidays. . . ." And, as a matter of fact I did return, but the pretty boarders did not appear.

This was the subject of my episode, and it gave the poem a character of its own. . . . That these young people should have taken the liberty of reading one of my books may seem surprising, but it must be observed that they would not have done this with any other young townsman: they respected me because I never insulted them when they took the collection in church, as did others; on the contrary, I treated the young collectors with the greatest deference. Also I was a friend of Laloge, who always spoke well of me during his daily visits to his sister. Probably they could not take advantage of my offer because one of the three mentioned their reading to Mme Hardouin, and they got scolded for it. She may have been right: there are characters to whom novels are dangerous, but they are not many.

Mlle Lalois comes next in the *Séjour des Charmes*. Her type of beauty was in contrast to the delicate loveliness of her friend: she was seductively rounded, very white skinned, with fine eyes and abundant black hair. Again an episode was provided by a meeting, of which this is the story. Mme Parangon paid a little visit to Paris, the reason for which concerned me, and was so generous and kind that it completes the picture of all that

I owe to this adorable woman. She took her sister Fanchette there to acquire the polish and finished graces of the capital, so that she might show superior to all my passing fancies. She left her there, so as not to be too long away from home. But during her absence I began to feel that my long times alone with pretty Toinette, whom I was teaching to read, might become a danger, and, knowing the reasons for Mme Parangon's journey, I wanted to second her by avoiding her too seductive maidservant. So when I was tired of translating I used to go out, leaving the key with the Dlles Cuisin, aunts of the rosy Clôdon and the lily-white Marianne Roullot, and seek for sunny and retired places wherein to read in a pleasant lethargy.

One afternoon I found a most delightful spot at a little distance from the banks of the Yonne, in a shallow valley sheltered by a small hill and enclosed with high hedges. I was reading Chaulieu . . . Mme Hardouin had brought her pupils in the same direction, and after they had had something to eat in a neighbouring dairy, pretty Lalois followed a path covered with wild strawberries and thus came upon me. The strawberries were very much better where I was, and as I had only brought light reading, I had gathered some and piled them on vine leaves beside me, to eat as I read and to refresh myself. She blushed as she caught sight of me: "Come here," I said, with that simple frankness which emboldens shy Beauty. "See, I have lots – and such fine ones! Take some!" "No, they are yours. But I will gather some here; yes, they are beauties." "I will help you then, for I have enough." We picked them together and put them in a big white handkerchief. She already had a good supply when Julie Dugravier arrived: "There you are, Thérèse," she said running towards us. "Is he helping you?" "Yes, Mademoiselle. Look, those are mine; take them. It will save you the trouble of picking them." Pretty Dugravier needed no pressing. "Ah, Julie!" exclaimed Lalois reproachfully. "How can you steal away in one moment all that has taken him so long to collect?" "He gave them to me willingly." "Ah yes, most willingly!" I exclaimed. "And I am very much obliged." But the dear child would only take half.

At this moment Mlle Laloge arrived: "Come quickly, your absence has been noticed. . . . Good evening, Monsieur," she added, smiling. "Always reading, and always finding the prettiest retreats?" "Yes, Mademoiselle, but you make them prettier. . . . You are in a hurry and cannot stay, so take these strawberries, and I will pick more." "Oh, no." "You have not the heart to refuse me a thing that would give me so much pleasure?" Could she have done otherwise than accept a present offered in such a manner? "There, now he has given them all away!" said Thérèse, as she went away with Julie. Mlle Laloge thanked me with a charming smile, which expressed respect combined with confidence; the same which made Mme Parangon so adorable. I took the hem of her dress and raised it to my lips. My homage touched her; I read it in three glances she threw over her shoulder at me as she went away; and I overheard the words, *"Cruel parents!"*

Reader, this was one of the happiest moments in my life! Ah, if you knew with what sweet emotion I retell it in this the sixtieth year of my life, and with no remorse! (Yes, I feel no remorse; although in my poem I am silent on a matter which could not be told there, and of which sweet Sophie, mentioned in the *Drame de la Vie,* p. 713, was the issue: never could I regret my share in Nature's masterpiece!)

*The wise directress of the Abode of Beauty, who is a pattern of discretion in all she does, now gave the signal for diversion. At the edge of the meadow*

> *they served a simple meal of pleasant fruits and the fresh produce of the dairy, for such is the food preferred by budding youth. Lying beneath an alder, in that loveliest month, I dreamed of the Loves, and then caught sight of* Lalois. *The ground was covered there with strawberries, and the red of them was a foil to her green dress. Tempted by her fondness for this delicate fruit, the fair one wandered towards me at haphazard, and I was moved with rapture; for when she saw me her face became one mantle of shy blushes.*

The verses are not good enough to continue. . . . I describe our interview which, according to the poem, was becoming very tender when Dugravier joined us. . . . I express regret for the interruption, and give a full description of Thérèse's charms to show all that I had lost. . . . But I end by finding consolation in Émilie's arrival, whereby I obtained the happiness at which I have hinted.

The third song in the *Séjour des Grâces* is in *Praise of Julie Dugravier*. There was nothing in common between Julie's beauty and that of her companions. Though only fifteen, she was taller than Émilie, and her slight graceful figure and large well-modelled features foreshadowed a superb, abundant woman, white-skinned and seductive, of a type one cannot but admire. For time and scene I chose one of those beautiful evenings which follow the longest days, when supper is at eight o'clock at latest, or at seven for those who want to join in the evening promenade, which goes on until the light fails. One Sunday in June, I saw the young boarders setting out, and followed them unnoticed. They crossed the bridge, and walked among the smiling meadows which neighbour the *Moulin-Judas* (so named because the mill-race is treacherous and dangerous). I settled myself in a charming retreat, hoping that one of the pretty nymphs would find her way there. I wanted Laloge; it was Dugravier who came. She had wandered from her companions gathering flowers. I watched her for a while at her childish pastime, and then, slipping into the miller's garden, gathered three beautiful nosegays and returned to my place. Dugravier came quite near without seeing me. As she turned aside to pick some wild salsify, I threw my posies upon the handkerchief in which she was collecting her treasure, and then hid more securely than before. Dugravier gave a start of wonder and surprise when she caught sight of them; she looked towards the willows and discovered me, and turned to fly. "Are you afraid of me, Mademoiselle?" "Oh, it is only you! I thought it was a man!" I laughed at her answer. . . . She meant a miller. . . . "No, it is I. I saw you picking wild flowers, and ran off to get some better ones from a place where you would not venture." "What, near the mill-race? Oh, if you had fallen in!" "No, no. But I risked my life to gather them for you, sweet Julie!" (I had heard dogs barking, and they might have picked up my scent and fallen upon me.) "Oh, how beautiful they are!" She dropped all her flowers at her feet like a child – white marguerites and little blue and yellow blossoms – and took up one of my posies. "Will you do me a favour, Mademoiselle?" "Yes, yes, yes!" "And give those two . . ." "I know, I know. . . . To Émilie and Thérèse. . . ." "Exactly." She took them without the littlest *thank you*, and ran with sweet eagerness to meet her friends. Thérèse was in front, and Émilie a few paces behind: "Take them . . . take them. . . ." And she ran back to me. The young boarders were very fond of their teacher, who was equally wise and kind, so I had foreseen her next request and had made another raid on the miller's garden, bringing back a great bunch of roses, carnations, honeysuckle and mignonette. "Oh, how I should love one for Madame Hardouin!" "Here it is." She took the posy eagerly, and ran off without a word. I never saw her again. She gave the flowers to her mistress, without, of course, saying anything about me. Émilie and Thérèse had already given their nosegays to Mme Hardouin, but she returned them and distributed the big bunch among the rest of the boarders. Everyone wanted to know where Dugravier had found such lots of flowers, and she said they came from the miller's wife. But Émilie and Thérèse knew the truth, for they had seen me; and the former had found a way of giving me a repetition of our moment on the strawberry day. This would have made a charming episode if my verses had been less rough and more regular in form.

> *The sun had scarcely sunk into the sea, taking his torrid splendour from the world when Hardouin, having supped, took her young Beauties, for my great delight, to taste the cooling air. The shy appealing Lalois comes, and dazzling Laloge is with her. I had gone before them deep into the green meadows, and was lost in dreams, when young Dugravier, with slow step and modest glance, appeared before me. You whom Love made so fair and so to move me. . . .*

I go on to a complete description of Julie's charms and to the episode which I have just related.

I began a fourth canto in praise of *Mademoiselle Philis Hollier,* who had at one time been with Mme Hardouin. She was a rich wife for some one! At this time she had a passion for Brother Saint-Hermine, and her pretty chambermaid, Goton, was mad about Gaudet d'Arras. Philis wrote frequently to the object of her ardour, and used to send her letters by Goton, who took them to church and watched for a chance of delivering them. Gaudet d'Arras would often undertake the business, for the sake of making love to Goton; for he was dissolute despite his love for Manon, and Goton was not unkind. But all this belongs to a later time, and must be dealt with in its proper place. . . . Here are a few lines from the fourth canto, and the last of the *Séjour des Grâces* properly speaking. The remaining cantos are detached:

> *I know nothing here below to equal this stirring and yet so fatal Beauty; whose divine allurement and conquering charm have subdued my senses in default of my heart. Flowers bloom on her cheeks, and snow lies in her alabaster breast; Love adds their keen points of desirous joy to his forged arrows there, points that give excess of salt to her quick beauty. It is not respect her black eyes shoot into our hearts, but flaming sparks inclining men to lechery. Ah, do not consider this truth concerning your seduction a bitter satire, Philis, for Venus is the Mother of desire, and you are Venus. . . .*

The canto continues on this note, very different from the first three! I tell her that she has communicated something of her wanton charm to Goton, so that the maid is as desirable as the mistress. My description of her is more shameless than any of the others; because I had no Madelon, who with all her indulgence, forced me to restrain myself a little. . . . This *Praise*, so absolutely different from the others, marks an advance in the corruption of my morals. It was never finished.

At the end of my Tertius Codex, I find that my poem was to have contained twenty-four cantos: the four of which I have just spoken came first, and the rest were in praise of those others whose beauty I had commemorated or meant to commemorate. Only nine were written at this time, counting the two that were only begun and never finished.

After Madelon's death, my inspiration failed me. I find no more verses to Émilie Laloge (who married pregnant), nor to Thérèse Lalois (who never looked at me without blushing), nor to Mlle Dugravier (who said to me one day as we were coming out of church: "Pretend not to know us."). I was gloomily absorbed in my passion for Colette. A note jotted down at the end of my fourth book, on the 20th of June, describes my state of mind:

*"Hodie 20 Junii, sacram. Ch. festi prid., in horreo juxta fenestram cum sederem, annos superiores in memoriam revocavi et dicebam intus: Quid annum, quid duos*

*cogitabam? Proh! hac ipsa die anno 1751, fœnum in valle Leonardino excutiebam, et illic ad me accedit formosa puella Francisca Berthier, sitis compescendæ gratia petens aquam. Canebam antea deliciose, avi saxiaria (œnante) me delectante solitario cantu. . . . Innocens eram. . . . Vivebas, o Magdalene! admirata procedebas! . . . Sed quid in annum? quid in duos reputabo? . . . Ha! forsan, miserior ero! . . . Sed forsan Colettam habuero? . . .** And lower down, dated 1754, are the terrible words: "*Facinus erupit!*"†

After Émilie went away and I was cut off from all communication with her two young friends, my spirits sank; but on the 11th of July I felt some stirrings in my heart while talking to Annette Bourdeaux, who seemed to have forgotten her little grievance against me. I was amazed; and note it as a phenomenon. . . . But the 14th was a day of great emotion!

It was the anniversary of my arrival in town; and I commemorated it for the second time. On rising I wrote on the first page of my first note-book: "*It is two years since I arrived here as an apprentice.*" (*Duo sunt anni cum hic adfui primum, tirocinii causa.*) I worked hard until half-past eleven, and then went out to keep my anniversary. I started at the *Porte-du-Pont*, saluting it with emotion, and then came back by the same route I had followed two years before, recalling all that I had experienced at each point, and stopping to greet Chambonnet as I had on my arrival. When I reached the Gothic clock tower, I regarded it with the same eyes and soaked myself in the same sensations. Tears of emotion ran down my cheeks. . . . I went indoors; I visited the rooms in the same order; I would have liked to dine in the kitchen with Aimée, Boudard and Tourangeot. I did not omit this ceremony in either of the two following years.

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*On this twentieth day of June, eve of the Fête-Dieu, I was sitting wearily near to my closet recalling the years that are past, and I asked myself: "What was I doing to-day, one year ago, or two years ago?" Ah, on this very day two years ago, while I was making hay at Vau-de-Lannard, pretty Fanchon Berthier got very thirsty and asked me for something to drink. . . . I had been singing; that lonely bird the solitary snipe, which makes its nest in lava, had induced a sweet melancholy with its monotonous crying. . . . I was innocent! . . . You were alive, O Madelon! You were walking down this street, beautiful and admired! . . . And what shall I be thinking a year hence, two years hence? Shall I perhaps be even more wretched? Shall I perhaps have had Colette? . . ."

†1754. "The assault has been committed!"

From this day on all my notes are concerned with my passion for Mme Parangon, but I had not a single private conversation with her. . . . Did she read my purpose in my eyes?

An incident on the 29th of July, involving Manon Prudhot, myself and her father, produced a little poem entitled *Mysis*, one of those which Mme Lebègue tore out of my note-books in 1760. I see by the number of pages that it must have contained about six hundred lines, and that I was engaged on it until the 15th of August. There is a note dated the 29th of July to the effect that I wrote a great deal of it on that day; doubtless in my first enthusiasm I made considerable progress. This was the incident which gave me my subject:

It was I who had broken off the friendship between myself and the Prudhots, and apparently this procedure did not suit either the father or the mother or the two daughters; so it was decided in a little family council that Mlle Manon should make advances to me. Therefore she greeted me when she next saw me, and I was too polite not to respond. I went up to her, and she retreated into the shop as I approached. I thought she had something to say to me, and wanted me to go into the shop, as I had done half a dozen times before. We were allowed to talk quietly on indifferent matters for more than a quarter of an hour, but we were spied upon. A customer came in; and this was the moment for which they were waiting in order to send me about my business publicly. But they were denied this pleasure, for I went out as her father came in. M. Prudhot, thinking I was still there, began to scold his daughter for receiving me, and was just going to turn on me, when he noticed that I was not there. He finished his scolding, but the plan had not succeeded: on the contrary, the scene put Manon in the wrong, and it was thought that she had a private understanding with me. Mme Parangon spoke to me about it the same evening. I told her the facts, and Manon Bourgoin told us the rest. . . . I was indignant, and revenged myself, vulgarly and criminally, in *Mysis.*

I pretend that M. Prudhot is angry with me because he is jealous of his daughter, and describe an imaginary incident in which I surprise him trying to force her into submission, while she resists weeping. Catching sight of me, he pretends that he was only punishing her for some fault. But he never forgives me. . . . To revenge himself, he tries to trick Mysis into an attempt to possess the fair girl. The young man walks into the trap; but the jealous father spies upon them from a hiding-place and, just when the amorous Mysis is on the point of winning to supreme bliss, he is for ever deprived of love's arrow. The cruel father saves his life with the greatest care, and when he is cured, perpetuates his torment by forcing him, a eunuch, to wed a beautiful woman whom he can never possess. . . . There is much of license in the poem, but it has amusing points. It was never shown to anyone except Gaudet d'Arras, who read it to Manon Bourgoin. They would very much have liked to show it to Mme Parangon also, but they did not dare to; as she could not have endured to listen to it, and its freedom would have grieved her.

The day concludes with a note concerning an aberration provoked by some article of Mme Parangon's dress; my passion for her increased twofold with the destruction of all hope of renewed intimacy with Mlle Prudhot. . . . As we know, the thought of Mlle Fanchette prevented me from turning my mind to Berdon. On the 3rd of August I note that I am sad and downhearted. Yet that same evening my mind was distracted and my volatile emotions stirred by the sight of Maîne Lebègue, the beautiful singer, passing by. She responded graciously to my greeting, and I began to plan a liaison, and (also on the same evening) wrote four lines including her in my *Fastes*, which I was then just beginning, having laid aside my *Séjour des Charmes* for good and all.

On the 10th I realised that I had a rival with Lebègue in Quatremère, a young lawyer. This is explained in my *Fastes*; I call her fickle, and so dispose of her. . . . In a note I remind myself that it was three years since M. Antoine Foudriat had called on us at Sacy and, seeing the translation of Justin on which I was engaged, had read several pages, and then said in a low voice to my father: "Those sons of yours at Courgis are wretches to sacrifice this young man to their jealousy!"

We have reached the 14th of August. Work finished early because no candles were lit until the 8th of September. Devoured by my passion for Colette, who seemed to avoid me, I sat on the bench in front of the door, so that I could see whether she stayed indoors or came out alone: in either case I meant to join her. As I was sitting half inside the outer door of our cellar (which was several steps below ground level) two people came out of Mme Baron's house. They were talking about my dear Madeleine, and at that same moment I heard an infant's wail. One of them was that Mlle Paintendre, about whom I had written certain verses; the other was the elder Mlle Roullot, since Mme Chardon. "It is infamous," Mlle Paintendre was saying, "that the memory of that poor girl should be slandered, and that her sisters have not defended her better! Is it possible that, loving Nicolas as much as is proved by what she wrote to him two hours before her death, she listened to . . . Leroy?" "Do not believe it for a moment!" answered Mlle Roullot. "I was present when Leroy arrived, and when Madelon felt the first approach of her illness. It is true that she went to see Maîne Blonde in the morning, for she was seen coming back. She was already ill when she got home, but she tried to overcome it. The . . . of the ch . . . made her illness shorter. . . ." "Ah, Mademoiselle Eulalie, how glad I am that you have told me this. But I am not at all satisfied with her sisters! To have torn up the will in which she bequeathed certain things to the man who was practically her husband, things that would have pleased him! . . . Not to have delivered that last farewell which would have comforted him!" I listened, breathless. I was agitated by a thousand emotions, but indignation against myself for so soon forgetting this tender-hearted girl dominated all others. (And what should I have felt if I had known then that Madelon had made me a father, the father of that admirable Thérèse whom you will love, as I loved her even before I knew her? If I had known that they had concealed a will, and kept certain things which she had left to me; though only to give them to this child – this child, the idol of her uncle and her two aunts, who left her everything – could I then have borne my emotion?)

Two men coming from under the clock-tower interrupted the conversation. One offered a hand to Mlle Paintendre (it was Carouge, the hammer-keeper of the woods and forests), and the other, Chardon, son of the cloth merchant, to Mlle Eulalie; and they went away together. I forgot all about Mme Parangon. I ran across the Place Saint-Étienne and took refuge in the terrible solitudes around Notre-Dame de la Cité. There my overcharged heart at last found vent in these words: "Vile coward! Wretch unfit to live! You never defended your wife against d'Arras! You listened to him quietly! Dying and unhappy, she thought of nothing but you, expecting to live beloved in your memory! And you have already forgotten her! You allowed her to be slandered! Your gross brutal nature was not worthy of her! Go, wretch, you will never be happy; you are not worthy to be! Go, dragging your convict's chain of misery, which no human power can break! You deserve to be overwhelmed with contempt and shame and ignominy! You will always be vile, and always reviled. Your life will be a reproach; you will be the scorned of the scorned!* You are an unnatural monster, because you forgot her, because your cowardly and faithless heart was letting slip her image, when Heaven itself sent news of her to avenge her and show you all your baseness. . . . You have used your pen against her sisters and her cousins!† Go hide, for they have read your crime upon your forehead, and in your wicked, jealous eyes! O fair young Berdon, O young, ingenuous Manette! You judged me aright! I was worthy neither of her letter nor her gifts. . . . You were right to keep them

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*And this has come true, and from such people as *Nougaret, Labarpe, Panckoucke, Laporte, Defer, Dhémery* the constable, the *Saint-Legers* father and daughter, *Stouppe, Bastien, Flins, Fontanes,* the people of Auxerre in general, the younger *Knapen, Granger* the comedian, *Fréron, Geoffroy, Royou,* the *Quillaus* uncle and nephew, *Augé, Durosoy,* the *Rochelles,* mother and daughter, *Carra,* the *Lebègues,* mother and daughter, *Neville,* etc.

†I suppressed this incident when copying: but I must just touch on it here. At the beginning of July and throughout the summer the Mlles Baron and their cousins, daughters of the consuls' attorney Bezanger, were slandered by their ruthless fellow citizens, probably because of Madelon, whose child Thérèse Bezanger named at baptism. And I myself, in a moment of temper caused by their excessive reserve (the result of malicious gossip), was base enough to write a shameful song against my sisters-in-law and Mme Baron, which I only showed to Fusier, the printer:

*The yielding, young and most delightful Berdon only loves the lads as a support.*
*How many a shepherd has refused, because of the divine attractions of that other, his arms to the Bezanger.*
*This last showed herself to the lover, but being so much less beautiful, shall only act as procuress henceforward.*

Humbly I shoulder all the ignominy which these abominable verses will load upon me. It had ten verses and was dated the 3rd of July.

from me. . . . Ah, they would scorch my hands if I dared to take them now. . . . There you are, look at yourself! Is there in all the world a monster that can frighten you as much? Oh, oh! . . ."

My tears choked me. . . . A man, whom I took at first for one of those vile fellows who come to that place to satisfy their crapulous lust with ill-conditioned servants, but who, as I discovered later, was far guiltier than they, heard me, listened to me, and then approached, exclaiming: "Who are you, who thus expend your grief in self reproach?" I fled round the corner of the Chapel. But the voice pursued me, repeating: "Who are you?" "A coward, a criminal!" I shouted. "What is your crime?" "Ingratitude!" I exclaimed with fearful energy. "You are right! That is a horrible crime. . . . How can you make reparation?" "By remorse!" "You can still feel remorse! . . . You are fortunate! It is twenty years since I have felt it! Oh, if you have remorse, do not stifle it!" At the same moment a light appeared in the window of a Canon's house, and was turned upon us by a servant, who had been frightened by my cries. It fell upon a man with his hand on the bosom of a handsome brunette, his maternal aunt though younger than himself! It was Madame L3nırd . . . who, like Cleopatra, was sometimes seized with a fury of eroticism. . . . I shuddered. . . . A few paces off the flickering light showed me the wealthy boatman *Motré*, with a pretty little blonde whom I did not know; but who, recognising me, spread it abroad that I enjoyed Mme. L3nırd's favours. . . . The latter, it was said, came to this spot when the fit was upon her, to calm herself with the first comer, careful only to choose strangers. . . . Revolted by what I had seen, I rushed down the passage which leads to the lonely little street of the Grands-Jardins; I paced up and down it a hundred times, wrapped in my thoughts, and scorched by the bitterness of my despair and my remorse. . . . The amazing thing was that the beautiful L3nɪrd did not distract my mind for a moment! Only in the night did the thought of her return, and then . . . but see my Calendar. . . .

I found Mme Parangon alone. I bowed to her sadly and was passing on, when she said: "What is the matter?" "I am ashamed of myself: Madelon is vindicated!" "Yes, and for me utterly since this evening. . . . Sweet girl," she added, raising her eyes to heaven, "why cannot I see you happy now. . . ." "From this evening?" I asked. "But it was this evening that I discovered the truth!" "You know then?" I answered rather too quickly: "I know everything." "What course are you going to take?" "I am unworthy of her gifts. . . ." "I would not say that you are unworthy, but I commend your delicacy. . . . Ah, and what delicate instincts had that girl whom I never knew well enough! What she did for you is beyond all imagination. . . . And her motives for doing it were finer still. . . . But she was unmarried. . . . " "Ah, Madame, you do not know all the wrong I have done her. . . ." "There are some wrongs which cease to be wrongs. . . ." She had not understood, and I was going to explain, when I heard M. Parangon at the gate taking leave of his friends, and I hurried away.

Oh, with what agony I saw Madelon's window! I caught a glimpse of her sisters, and a cry was wrung from me which frightened them. They opened the window, and I knelt to ask their forgiveness, but they could not see me. . . .

Reader, I do not think that you would call me superstitious? Yet what I am going to relate will surprise you, for my tale is as true as your own existence. . . . My remorse had been sincere; it always was. . . . It wiped out my crime towards Madelon, towards my wife; and it was she herself who came to give me absolution. I went to bed still lost in thought. The extraordinary emotions of the evening produced a kind of collapse, and I fell into a drowse only half undressed. My light burnt low, and flickered feebly. My eyes were open. I saw a nymph-like girl, taller than Madelon, dressed in white and covered with a garment of a shape that I had never seen before, but which has since been adopted in the tailored coat of our Parisians. "It is not she . . ." I thought. "She was not so tall. . . ." At last I saw her face, and it was Madelon! "Dear wife," I exclaimed, "how you have grown! . . . But you are dead? . . . Oh, that I might embrace you for the last time, dear shade. . . ." "No, I am myself. . . . Dear friend, your tears have touched me. Dear husband, do not grieve! Your cries have reached to the happy place where I dwell, and have troubled the repose that I enjoy, with all other girls who have died before they were twenty-five. We shall be reunited there some day. . . ." I listened to her overjoyed, yet noticing that she had spoken without moving her lips. . . . I tried to seize her and embrace her, though convinced that she was but a shadow*

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*Refer to the engraving, which completes what I have left unsaid. . . . I am better informed now about the facts and can tell what actually happened, and it will be obvious with what good reason I made Gaudet d'Arras play such an important part in the *Paysan-Paysanne Pervertis*. It seems that the Cordelier had followed all my movements, had overheard me, and had made arrangements to provide an illusion which fitted in with his ideas of what was good for me. This is what he did. . . . He got hold of the beautiful L3n1rd, dressed in the manner I have described; he introduced her by the wetting-room door, of which, with the knowledge of M. Parangon, he had a key, and made her hide in the loft. He told her everything, and bade her play her part according to circumstances. Thus everything is explained. It is obvious that an hysterical woman, whose husband had been away for several years, would co-operate with enthusiasm. But what interest had Gaudet d'Arras in procuring me either the woman or the illusion? This question will only be asked by those who have not studied human nature in all degrees. Apart from the personal reason that, as he meant to take me into partnership, he wanted to inure me to his ways so that he should not have to hide things from me, there were two ready to slip from my grasp. . . . But no . . . she was real . . . I took fire: I wanted to possess her once again! (Do you shudder in amazement, Reader?) And my desire was crowned! . . . Delirium forsook me: my eyes opened (if they had not been open before) and I was wide awake. Madelon was moving majestically away. . . . Three times she turned to waft me a kiss; her smiling face was full of charm. . . . I stood still enraptured; my heart, though sad, once more at peace. . . . I finished undressing and was getting into bed, when I was moved by a desire to look out of the window. Madelon's two sisters were at theirs, and I thought I saw her between them, and cried out in a stifled voice: "Mesdemoiselles, keep her, keep her!" "Is that Monsieur Nicolas? But whom, whom?" "Her . . . herself. . . . Alas, it is only I can see her. . . ." And I went to bed at once, without considering whether I should see her again. . . .

Praise be to God, for having comforted a despairing wretch with this illusion! Father of Nature, all powerful Being from whom we issue, how often since have you not granted the ardent prayers I offered up, my eyes upon the stars which are an emanation from your substance! Mortals, there is a God; but not the God of Jewish and Christian fable; he is Order

others: one common to all monks, who have grown to be the tempters of mankind; and the other to all citizens of ordinary towns without theatres, who have all the coarseness of the peasant, combined with the dangers of a city dweller's leisure. . . . Christians have inveighed against theatres; but from what vices have they not preserved the big towns! From petty intrigue, malicious gossip, and from extravagant and brutal tastes, such, for instance, as that of Gaudet d'Arras for humiliating a married woman taken at a disadvantage, and forcing her to serve his lust with the complacence of a whore. If I did not know Gaudet d'Arras so well, I should suspect him of having provided a scene of brute sensuality for his own pleasure, but he had other motives. . . . Oh inept Jean-Jacques, and so unworthy of the respect accorded to you, what a quantity of ill-considered nonsense you have talked about Latin, music, and the theatre! You have done nothing good except your *Discours sur l'Inégalité,* your *Héloïse,* your *Contrat Social,* and your *Lettres de la Montagne.*

and eternal Reason, the God of the French Republic! Let us praise him; for he holds man in a particular love, as the chief of animal creation. Fellow men, let us praise God, and love one another, for we are all his children. . . .

I was saying that I went to bed. From this happy moment I was at peace: no more remorse; my wife had driven it from my heart. I was convinced of her purity and of her innocence; I was proud of having been her husband and the sole object of her affection. Ah, how she had loved me, and how happy I should have been with her! . . . After I had told her about this illusion and the *Dream* that followed it, Madame Parangon often said to me: "I regard you as a privileged being, my friend, under the special protection of God: this vision is proof of it. . . . No, you are not an ordinary man!" Angel of heaven, it was you who were no ordinary woman, but a divine being! In losing you I lost everything! . . . O Colette, you are present in all that I regret! I can regret no one without thinking of you also; in misfortune I regret you, for you would have protected me; in happiness I regret you, for you would have rejoiced in it more intensely than myself! With my last breath, I shall exclaim: "If Colette were here, I should not die!"

I slept peacefully and had a real dream, the charm of which lives with me to this day. [I was then in my nineteenth year; I was forty-nine when I wrote these words; and am sixty now as I set them up, this 1st of March, 1794 (11th Ventôse).] I wrote it down in verse in my *Quartus Codex*, on the 15th of August at eight o'clock in the morning, while memory was still fresh and strong, and it will be found in this form in the *Drame de la Vie*, pages 1218-19-20. But on the same day I wrote a more interesting narrative in prose which I shall use here.

### *Dream in which I saw Mademoiselle Madelon Baron*
### *Died 11th March, 1753*
### (The most unfortunate day of my life!)

The first four lines explain that I know it was only a dream. . . .

"I was in a charming abode, where lovely girls strove to win my heart, when suddenly the scene changed. . . . I passed under a sombre gateway and into an enormous shop filled with dismal objects. A spectre appeared; an old priest, clad in a long, shiny cassock, all in rags. He took my hand; I shuddered. . . . A hundred gloomy doors turned groaning on their hinges . . . he pushed me through the darkest, and said farewell. . . . As I advanced I saw a heavenly light, and presently came out into a delightful place. There I saw Timander (my name for Madelon in verse ever after she adopted it in her song). I flew to her: 'Ah, is it really you I see? . . . O fairest Timander, you alone have all the love, all the tenderness, all the devotion of my heart! I swear it by the Gods, by the Lord of the Thunder, by the Goddess of the Earth, and by all immortal citizens of heaven. . . . And yet I know that through my love death ravished you in the flower of your youth. We were reunited in a dream; it is in a dream that I see you now. . . . It is the Gods and you, O Timander, that temper the bitterness of my afflictions, and I prefer my dream to all reality. . . . Let me converse with you, dear shade. . . . Deign to answer me!' She leaned against me, yielding and voluptuous as she had been on the 7th of March, only I felt no weight. . . . She kissed me, and then her charming mouth deigned to utter these words: 'Did your passion die with your sweetheart, and did that same passion make you offer your heart to my dear sister? . . . O friend, be faithful to me. . . . In this peaceful place . . . an innocent shade . . .

feels the affection . . . that the living keep for her: here Destiny will reunite us . . . for ever . . . if your constancy deserves it. It is ordained by Destiny . . . that our happiness . . . shall depend on you. . . .' 'Ah, Timander,' I exclaimed, 'I love none but you! Deign to look kindly on me, that I may feel once more the witchery of your smile!' Madelon stooped to kiss me, for she was very tall here also! I threw myself into her arms, and pleasure came once more to join our souls. I woke in a rapture of happiness."

Just God, what an awakening! Luxurious satisfaction combined with fatigue, rapture with regret, pain with pleasure – in fact all the emotions were mixed and confounded in me, and yet were separately distinguishable . . . I jumped out of bed, dressed, and hastened to write down my dream in verse, without stopping to think and without erasion; in less than an hour I had written nearly eighty lines. . . . Later I added this note: *"Die* $15^a$ *Aug.,* $h^a$ $8^a$ *fere* $9^a$*, 1753: nocte somniavi, ut narro."* And above in the margin, where I make my protestations and the lines are short: *"Sic, O Magdelene! Sic adorabaris! et nesciebas!"* . . . The same day I wrote another note, at the foot of my Praise of Madelon which I had given her in January: *"Ante me tam chara, tamque amata puella, mea conjux, die nefanda* $11^a$ *Martii abiit*; *et hodie* $15^a$ *Augusti, in illusione atque somno bis vidi, emotione tanta, ut compesci nequeat."*

My mental state during the rest of that day, the 15th, is indescribable. I went to the Saint-Gervais arch, where I re-read all that I had ever written to Madelon, and saturated myself in the emotions which she had inspired in me when alive. . . . This crisis lasted for a fortnight; but it only served to postpone a terrible explosion! . . .

About the 29th of August, the Patronal Festival of my own village (which I celebrated in my heart so as to be one with my family in their rejoicings), I began the most important of my poetical works. It was inspired by Mme Parangon, for whom I had only written the two trifles quoted on pp. 1215, 1216, 1217, 1219, 1220 of the *Drame de la Vie*; I called it *Mes Fastes.* In it I commemorated every notable event in my life since my childhood. . . . But this poem, of more than four thousand lines, fell under the destructive hand of *Agnès Couillard,** the widow of René Lebègue, who tore out the leaves and burned them, together with my diary of the most important period of my life; that is to say, from Nov. 11th, 1753, to March 25th, 1754: it is an irreparable loss to these *Memoirs.* The poem began with an invocation to Colette:

"Be my Muse, for I want no other inspiration save you, divine Colette. You shall be the crowning glory of my song. When you have read it you will know me; and you will know the heart in which you reign, divinest woman. Some day perhaps I shall be your sister's husband; I would not deceive either you or her. Both of you shall see me stripped; and if thereby you are convinced that you are my one and only passion, you will say to your dear sister: 'This was my wealth, and I gave it to you. . . .' "

Then I review all the happenings of my life much as I have told them here, and I suppose it was the close attention necessary to put these into verse that engraved them on my memory. It has been impossible to remember here all the detail into which I entered; so much of light and shade has now escaped me. After a description of my various loves among the girls of the country and the town, I come to my love for Colette, which I express with an energy born of its violence at that time, a violence which led to the strangest of catastrophes. I only wrote in moments of excessive passion, when my sufferings dragged tears from me, or when a seeming advance towards success hurled me from anguish to intoxication, and from intoxication to delirium. . . .

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*This was Restif's future mother-in-law. [Ed.]

On the 31st of August I find a note which announces the beginning of my *Fastes*, and gives the first four lines:

> *Ah, be my muse, Colette, instead of the deceitful Sisters; there is no need for lying goddesses here, since candour alone informs my Songs and my Colette is true, as is her beauty.*

*"O quam nunc heræ Colettæ meæ formosissimæ infelici crucior amore! . . . Proh! subigenda! Uror enim . . ."* And afterwards: *"Adhuc non subegi. 10ª Septembris. . . . Non adhuc. 6ª Octobris."* And finally an amazing note which I will not quote yet. . . . This last note states that I have made progress with my *Fastes* and have already written two thousand lines; that I have reached my life in the town, and am concerned with Mme Parangon. I add in Latin, a necessary precaution on account of Bourgoin, Bardet and Tourangeot, who might get hold of my note-books: *"Quam male me gero! Ægroto, mœreo. Heræ amorem dicere volvo. . . . Quam formosa! quam hanc felicem, optatamque diem, qua illam habebo veneribusque potiar, votis propero! . . ."*

*"In me tota tuens Venus, Cyprum deseruit. . . ."*

On the 11th of November I find another note in which the mad ferment of my passion breaks out: *"Aut habere, aut mori! . . . Hodie probam legendo, illa adstante, tanta nobis fuit erotica rigiditas, ut dorsum exeundo erigere nequebamus."* I go on to say that Gaudet d'Arras had come in after supper with Manon Bourgoin and had spoken most flatteringly of Madelon Baron; which so visibly pleased me that Mme Parangon was moved to say that I had a good, an excellent heart. . . . Then we discussed a question of metaphysics:

the cause of our fear of death. Gaudet d'Arras maintained that the fear of death was absolutely necessary so that animate nature should take steps to preserve life, which would very quickly be extinct if every living creature had not a horror of its own destruction. He admitted the immortality of the soul; but denied the existence of either hell or heaven. "When the body dies, our soul loosed from its bonds, rejoices in its freedom and is amazed at ever having loved life! For physical reasons it seems to me that this free existence should last about two hundred and fifty years; because it is probable that we can only reanimate the matter of which our own generation is composed and that this matter is only sufficiently dissolved for revivification after the lapse of this period of time. For the first hundred years of this unencumbered life, the soul is happy and carefree as during its corporeal youth. A hundred years of happiness in the full force of its age follows. But the last fifty or twenty-five years are made horrible by the fear of a return to corporeal life. The day of the soul's re-entry into a body is fixed: it is the last day of the two hundred and fifty years; but it does not know into what estate it will be born: whether master or valet, rich or poor, handsome or ugly, tall or short, crooked or well-made, witty or foolish, honest or thievish, etc. That is what terrifies it, and makes wretched the last years of its spiritual existence. In this world we do not know what we were in our other life, because the body given to the soul is new and without memory. On the other hand, the dematerialised soul remembers everything that happened to it in its last incarnation, and in all its previous spiritual lives."

This strange conception amazed us all, and scandalised the ladies, who maintained that it sapped the very foundations of morality. Gaudet d'Arras began to laugh. He contended that all man's ideas on vice and virtue are folly: goodness is beauty, and vice is ugliness, and both are equally necessary to supply the two extremities; just as a ladder of sixty rungs must have a lowest and a topmost rung; if five or fifteen rungs are taken away, two ends will still be left, which are virtue and vice; and so on, until the ladder is reduced to one rung, which will be the mean. He told us that he had written a Satire in the manner of Juvenal on this subject, called *Soap Bubbles*, of which he gave us a summary. But I will give no account of this here as it is quoted in its entirety in the *Paysan-Paysanne,* Part 8, p. 420, as it was written out from memory next morning and revised in 1777.

Mme Parangon seemed very vexed that I should have been present at this conversation; she interrupted it as soon as possible, and permitted no more of the same kind in her presence. But Gaudet d'Arras instructed me in private.

On Monday the 12th of November, distressed to see my life consumed in a useless, dangerous, and criminal passion, I resolved to turn my heart to young Edmée Servigné, and make love to her on behalf of the younger of my cousins. And I confess (for I must hold nothing back) that I realised my project only too well. I protest that I never meant to betray her, but was carried away by my passion for women and for pleasure. . . . I express my anxiety in these words:

*"Servinæam hodie vidi, ac amare, blandirique, propter singularem formam conabor: nam eresictonias epulas sunt amores pro hera, ob multipliciores difficultates."*

It was about the 20th that I began those ordered and consecutive notes which were stolen from me; for I find among the last of those scattered at the end of my *Quartus Codex* one dated the 19th of November, noting the return of M. Parangon's mother and sister to Paris. I rejoice: "*Gaudeo; nam mihi forsan impedimentum fuere. Sola e longinquo non fuit hera.*"

The following entries have all been torn out; but I remember perfectly the 27th of November, and the note written on the morning of the 28th: "*Abieram post colloquium cum Gaudæo Arrasio et Gotona Hollierea ancilla, quam mihi prostraturiebat. Amore, Furiisque agitatus, in horreum sto, immobilis ut milvus alaudam conspiciens tremulam (nam Coletta cubare sola decreverat, absente Parangone). Et sic dico: 'Abest Gigas: Arrasii monitiones sequamini! Audeamus! Audaces (ait) Fortuna juvat. . . .' Statim excalceatus fereque nudus operte descendo, pessulum gradatim ac sine strepitu verro; ad cubiculum Dianæ profanus Actæon pervenio, temerariasque manus intra lintea demissas, ad formosos artus admoveo. Semi-expergefacta submissa voce clamat: 'Ecquem? ecquem audio?' Sileo, non ausus nefanda verba proferre. Manum extendit, susurrando: 'Felem? felem? . . .' Ego ventre humi prostrato, corpus paulatim attollo, et ausculto. Quieti redditam, illam semi-somnus capit. Et redeunt ad facinora patrantes manus. Suspirat. . . . Timui. . . . Ad januam serpo, revolutoque gradatim pessulo, redeo ad cubicularium, aliquid novi tentaturus. Non opportune. . . . Ad meum horreum timidus tandem evasi. Sed vix tremulans in scalas eram, quum audiverim tintinnabulum Colettam moventem. Surrexit Antonella, et cum adoranda hera reliquam noctem virginiter complevit. Ego vero non hanc totam perdidi noctem: nam Arrasio curante, Gotonam ancillam terno coitu sum locupletatus. . . . Hæc heri, 28 Nov. 1753.*"*

M. Parangon had left on the 27th for Vermenton, though I was unaware of this. Gaudet d'Arras came to see me, and said laughing: "We have a beautiful widow!" I paid little attention to his words, being too much preoccupied with what I thought he meant: "If her husband died, this charming woman would make a beautiful widow." In the evening I was

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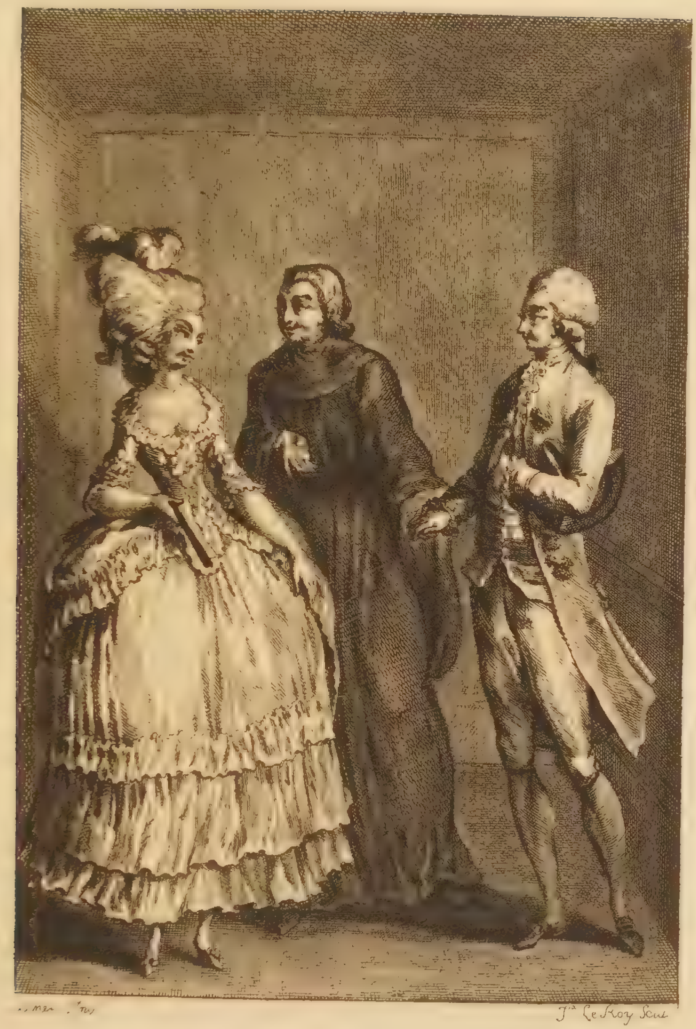
*The narrative follows in translation, p. 346 *sq.* [Ed.]

alone at table with Madame Parangon, as the foreman had been kept to supper by his uncle, together with Gaudet d'Arras – and perhaps on the latter's suggestion. A message had been sent inviting the *fair widow* also, but Gaudet d'Arras, who was all-powerful in the house, had prevented the servant from bringing it. Bardet had gone with M. Parangon. I knew nothing of all this. We talked after supper: it was nearly three months since Colette and I had had any private conversation. "The house seems a perfect desert after having had so many people all the Autumn," said Colette. "I would have liked to send my sisters to Paris with M. Parangon's mother and sisters, who are of a certain age, reliable, and well conducted. But I had a reason for not doing so: they were always singing the praises of Parangon's nephew (his brother's son), and then they would pass on to Fanchette, whom they saw when they visited my father. I would not consent to Fanchette coming here; all the beds were occupied, and she would have had to sleep out, and I made this the pretext for my refusal. I am not in favour of the marriage which the Parangon family seem to desire – for many reasons, of which you know the strongest. . . ." I bowed. When Toinette had cleared the table, we sat down by the fire.

"My mother- and sisters-in-law," continued Colette, "do not like you. I tell you this so that you may pay no attention if Monsieur Parangon sometimes speaks sharply to you; his mother and his sisters have put him against you a little." "But Madame, have I done anything to offend them? It was quite unintentional." "Yes, you have offended them. . . . But you need not be surprised at that; it was your views on the obedience a wife owes to her husband that were distasteful to the two Mlles Parangon; they are Parisians, and in their opinion a man who thinks and talks about this subject as you did on several occasions in their presence, is a rough, uncouth, mannerless sort of fellow." "I did not know this, or I would have held my tongue." "You would not have gained much," said Mme Parangon smiling. "Had they anything else to complain of?" "No; at least not in so many words: but I fancy they think you are not sincere; for they talked so much about your subtlety and address. . . . It is fortunate that I know you, or they would have frightened me. . . . If you have any qualities of mind and character, address is not among them, and still less subtlety; I credit you rather with the opposite faults. Still they consider you as subtle, cunning, crafty and dangerous." (I bit my lips, and I confess that what I thought was this: "If I could only steal away Colette, who is their pride and so far above them in mind and beauty, it would matter very little to me whether they liked or disliked, respected or despised me!") "You are thinking?" said Colette. "Yes, Madame, I am vexed at having offended these three ladies. . . . But what can I do about it?" "Nothing: they have gone, without the satisfaction (for which they hoped) of . . . overhearing some conversation, or catching some signs of an interest, which . . . it is not in my character to feel. Only try to conciliate Monsieur Parangon a little; Monsieur d'Arras can help us there; we must keep on good terms with that man, in spite of his dangerous principles." "I can only hope to succeed by following your advice, Madame, as other means have proved useless. As for yourself, I cannot help showing the respect and zeal that is in my heart." "Very much to the contrary!" she said, blushing a little; and I saw from her expression that she had not told me everything. "What do you mean, Madame? One does what one can, but I cannot help . . ." "What I mean is . . . you need not show quite so much enthusiasm when it comes to praising me . . . nor even in carrying out my orders. . . . Let Bardet, Tourangeot or Toinette execute them when it is to them I speak; do not knock everyone over in order to rush off somewhere where I have not sent you. One day you upset both my sisters-in-law on top of their mother." "I did not notice it, Madame." "I know that." "I will restrain myself, Madame. . . . It will be painful, but since you ordain it, it must be necessary." "Yes, it is necessary. . . . And that is not all; I have a piece of advice to give you. But it costs me. . . . I . . . do not want . . . you . . . to find . . . another Madelon . . . because I mean to carry out my plans for you; but I would like you to amuse yourself a little, honourably . . . just a pretence, to take Monsieur Parangon's mind off the subject of my sister Fanchette. . . . When it becomes a question of marriage, I shall know what to do. . . . At the moment I can count on it, because I have my father's support and . . . Émilie is married. . . . There is no one to regret now that . . . Émilie and Madelon are lost beyond hope." "Émilie Laloge? . . . Madame, how . . ." "I know all about that. . . ." "I have never adored anyone but . . ." "I know," she interrupted quickly, "and also the object of your passion would think twice before marrying you. My father says that passion has never made a happy marriage. You might have been happy with Madelon, who was never more than your friend and confidant; and you will be with my sister, because, as your passion is directed elsewhere, the liking that leads you to marry her is of the kind which will last. And, if you must know, it was this fact that decided my father. He knows everything." "Madame," I answered profoundly astonished, "do what you will with me; I swear to leave the conduct of my future in your hands, as in those of God Himself. I will enter into your plans as far as is within my power; but whatever happens, rest assured that one word from you and I shall be at your orders, your devoted slave." "Slave? No." "I neither abase myself nor cringe; I am proud with men,



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but I glory in being the adoring slave of the woman whom I . . . honour." (I would have preferred another word.)

Toinette came into the room, and Mme Parangon made her sit beside her, while she continued speaking to me. "I know what your sentiments are; they are honourable and could not offend me; but Toinette knows what has been said." "Lord, yes! I know, and I cannot conceive how intelligent young ladies of that age can have such ideas! They even told Monsieur one day, in this very room, that Monsieur Nicolas was madly in love with Madame! There's no sense in it!" (I blushed, thinking: "They are not wanting either in penetration or intelligence; but I think I have more, and will watch myself more carefully!") "And Monsieur," continued Toinette, "said straight out: 'I have much too good proof to the contrary to believe a word of it, that is, unless he is madly in love with three or four women at the same time; for I know he has three mistresses, apart from casual . . ." (Here Mme Parangon stopped innocent Toinette, who repeated these phrases without understanding their full force.) "Yes, Madame, they said that, and Monsieur answered as I have told you. . . . Their minds must be all twisted! . . . Besides, we know what Mademoiselle Madelon was to him when she was alive. Oh, if I was not a girl and dared speak to Monsieur, I should know what to say to him!" "You know my plans, Madame," I broke in, "and my hopes, so I may leave myself to your justice?" "Rest assured, Monsieur, that I know on whom I can rely," answered Colette. . . . "But let us read something." And she handed me Racine. I read *Phèdre*, which made a prodigious impression on the simple Toinette! But a reflection which she produced from the depths of her innocence, frightened Mme Parangon: "Then a woman . . . can love . . . another man . . . when she is married?" Toinette's admiration for me, to whom she attributed all her pleasure in being read to, made me understand how much one would love tragic actors and actresses if their morals were more worthy of their calling, and if they would separate themselves for good and all from mountebanks. . . . Toinette was so deeply moved that she kissed my hand as I was leaving the room, saying: "O Master, shall I read like you some day?"

As I was passing the wetting-room, I heard a noise. . . . I went to see what it was, and found Gaudet d'Arras there. I supposed he had been listening to us; but as he had a key, there was nothing to say. Besides, he made as if he was just coming in. He said he had something to tell me. It was only a long tale about the beautiful Hollier, but of so luscious a nature that I was considerably moved when I left him. I went upstairs absorbed in my reflections, and it was then that I began my note in Latin. It seemed to me that there had been something more of humanity in Mme Parangon's eyes when she looked at me; the sight of her charms had fired me, and perhaps, had it not been for Toinette, I might have dropped all restraint. . . . I was burning. . . . I stopped at the door of my closet. . . . I reflected on what I could do in M. Parangon's absence; on my conversation with Colette; on the reading of *Phèdre;* on Toinette's remarks; on all that Gaudet d'Arras had pictured to me; on the phrase *A beautiful widow!* "I must win her!" I exclaimed. "She is too beautiful for me ever to regret it. . . . She does not want me . . . to have another Madelon . . . but some suitable distraction. . . . There can be no doubt, she means . . . herself! Who else could it be? She does not want a second Madelon. . . . Ah, yes! and her kindness is equal to, surpasses . . . like Madelon, she wants to save me from lonely aberrations and from debauchery. . . . Come! She is expecting me. . . . Her modesty must be spared. . . . Not one action that could wound it. . . . I will enter this shrine reverently, . . . pretending that she is not awake. . . ." Such were the reflections that led me to take an audacious step. . . .

I went downstairs drunk with love and hope, and with no very clear idea as to what was going to happen. . . . In spite of the cold, I crossed the courtyard clad only in my shirt; I was on fire. . . . When I reached the parlour door, which did not lock on the inside, I turned the handle so slowly that it made no noise at all. I entered, and shut it with the same precaution. . . . Guided by the feeble light of a night lamp, I went to Colette's bed and knelt beside it . . . I sought to touch her. But this modest woman, although she was sleeping alone (and it was this that gave me pause), kept her bosom and all her other charms exactly covered. . . . I was in a terrible position! She woke up, and she stretched out her hand, saying: "Puss, puss! . . . Who is there?" Then, after a moment's thought, she called: "Toinette? Toinette?" I lay flat on my belly, and although her arm was stretched in my direction, it did not reach me. . . . If she had touched me, what would have happened? I still shudder at the thought! She might have taken me for a thief, and been dangerously frightened; she might have cried out, or rung the bell! Tourangeot, the foreman, Bardet, Toinette, Jean Lelong would have run to her; I should have been found, and I would have been ruined for ever. . . . Oh, what a triumph for my brothers! What a grief to my parents! Such were the thoughts that terrified me when it was too late; in the excitement of what I contemplated I had not thought at all. (Thus does a first crime come to be committed.) . . . She covered herself up again. I waited until I knew from her breathing that she was asleep, and then I tried to kiss her. . . . But I could not manage it; owing to her position I should have woken her. . . . A little calmness brought with it a spark of reason. I felt that I must get away without making an attempt in which it was obvious I should not be abetted; it was mad, impracticable. . . . I reopened the door, and shut it again so slowly that I did not make a sound. . . . There was much to show that Colette had heard me, for she gave me time to get upstairs again before ringing for Toinette, who slept in the kitchen which was separated from the living-room by a part of the courtyard. This adorable woman, this angel, said nothing to Toinette, but made her sleep in her room for the remainder of the night.

I reached my closet and got into bed. In spite of the cold and my scanty dress, I was sweating from every pore. I drew the bed-clothes over me. Soon, frozen by fear, I was shivering as with an ague: I trembled so violently that the bed shook beneath me. What terrifying thoughts crowded into my mind! I realised to the full the greatness of the risk I had run; I thought little of the greatness of my crime! Alas, with a degree more of excitement, or at another time perhaps, I should have used violence, and should have brought ruin upon myself and upon the unhappy object of my unconquerable passion. Whither was I not led by emotions grown great with toleration, and stimulated and nourished by the verses I wrote daily to express them, changing my pain into hot ardour and doubling the strength of my passion!

I was growing calmer and sleep was stealing over me, when I heard a slight crackling, such as is made by feet treading softly over gravel and crushing the grains of sand beneath them. I listened. . . . Some one opened my door, which closed with a simple wooden latch, and entered; at the same moment Toinette went in to Mme Parangon's room and a ray from her light enabled me to distinguish a young person of Colette's height and figure in a little piqué bodice. . . . Her skirt fell about her feet, and she got into bed with me in corset and stockings. I was not the sort of man to be frightened by a visit of this kind: but I was curiously perplexed! I recognised the hand of d'Arras in the business; but with whom had I to do? Ten people passed through my mind: but never the one whom I was meant to suspect. I thought of Mme L3n1rd, of Mlle Hollier, of Toinette, and even of Berdon. After she had gone, I recognised Goton *Pouillot*, the appetising chambermaid on the second floor. Oh, Gaudet d'Arras! You used too many tricks to hasten the process of corruption which would have gone forward of itself!

Colette said nothing next day about what had happened in the night: if she had her suspicions, she was too modest to let them appear. . . . She confided nothing to Toinette, nor to Bourgoin, nor even to Manon her friend. But in the evening she asked the latter, in my presence, to come and sleep with her while M. Parangon was away; and this was yet another kindness on her part: for if I were guilty of another imprudence, Manon was a friend to both of us, and incapable of indiscretion with anyone except Gaudet d'Arras, my adviser.

Such was the course and issue of my first attempt, the consequences of which were much more terrible than the act itself; for it convinced me that Colette had recognised me and was indulgent. And the breach which Gaudet d'Arras drove through my principles, by the sensual satisfaction he arranged for me after it? He treated me like a young dog, and made me smell the quarry to incite me to the chase.

Some days before this enterprise I had composed a declaration of my feelings for Colette in verse, to be included in my *Fastes*. I had meant to print it, and stick it in a book she often read; so that she would come across it as an ordinary page, continuing from the one before and leading on to the next. I thought that she would marvel at finding there verses which she had never seen before, and would speak to me about them; then I would read them to her with feeling, and my declaration would be made. However, I did nothing of the sort. The rumours current in the Parangon family had made me nervous, and my first attempt completely frightened me. . . . It will become clear as we go on that I was in a state of great agitation at this time; for I shall leave nothing out, or scarcely anything, since herein lies my usefulness.

On the following day I described my venture in the *Fastes*. The importance of secrecy was extreme, but I could not help myself, I had to write. Like the barber of King Midas, I confided in no living person; but I could not do without that inanimate confidant, which would one day enable me to revive experiences I wanted never to forget. Fortunately I found a safe hiding place in the loft, between the staircase roof and the tiles, and I used to put my fourth note-book there after I had been writing.

Will Mme Parangon be taxed with imprudence after what has been read, and thought disposed to treat my passion with indulgence? Suspend your judgment, Reader, it would be precipitate and rash. You will appreciate this admirable woman at her proper value when you see her behaviour as a whole; you will marvel at her as at one more perfect than seems consonant with human nature, and will no longer wonder that at times I doubted if she were a woman, or an Angel sent by Heaven in human form to guide me and protect me. . . . We shall know all that can be known about her when we reach the year 1757.

I had entered upon my twentieth year five days before the night of my adventure. . . . If Mme Parangon did not seem inclined to talk to me, I on my side unaffectedly avoided her. In the evening, seeing her with

Manon Bourgoin, I went out after supper to take a walk under cover of the kindly darkness that veils an unlighted town. A tumult of emotions agitated me; but different in character from those of August the 14th, and the effects could not be the same. I wandered about absorbed in thought and not knowing where I went. I strayed as far as Edmée Servigné's house. There was a light in it, but I did not knock; for my lips were sealed, and I felt as great an aversion from speech, as a hydrophobic feels from water. They were talking, and though I felt no curiosity, I listened in spite of myself. "He came down during the night, entered her room and got into her bed. She woke, because he was suffocating her. . . . She screamed! 'It is only I,' he said to her. . . . She took her slipper from a chair beside her, and hit him with it until he let her go. The heel got him on the nose, in such a way that the mark is quite recognisable. . . . He left by the lower window, which he had opened to get in. . . . If her husband only knew about it! . . ." I shuddered, thinking that a distorted version of my adventure was already abroad. . . . "But no," I reassured myself, "that would be impossible! . . . Let us hear some more." "These printers are so wanton," continued the vine-dresser who was talking to the young Servignés, "that honest folk cannot have them as boarders; they disturb the household and the whole neighbourhood; they are like stags on heat: anything is good enough for them." "Ah, we know a printer," said Catherine, "and a fine, handsome lad he is, who would be quite incapable of things like that." "Perhaps it was he," said the first speaker. "For the Master's cousin, Madame Yeury, wife of the journeyman printer who lives in the Grandcaire, told me that he seemed a good fellow." "What was the name of the man who did it?" asked Catherine. "He was called . . . wait a moment . . . I know his name . . . Gonn . . . Yes, Gonnet . . ." "Oh, he is not the same man. Ours is called Monsieur Nicolas." "Oh no, it was Gonnet; the man who arrived this summer, let me see, about the middle of August."

This tale interrupted my reverie. I marvelled that two such similar adventures had happened in the same town, in the same year, and in the same profession; and the analogy between them cooled my anguish for what I had done and diminished my horror of it; such is the danger of example! Such experiences as these have made me understand why it is that schoolmen and logicians are so insensitive. They compare instead of feeling! I returned home much calmer. Thus have I always been tripped up in the midst of anguish or joy, remorse or good intention.

Next day I said to Gonnet laughing: "I have been hearing about you." He blushed. "Speak low! What have you heard? . . ." "About Madame Jeannin, the wife of the man who used to be cook at the seminary." "Speak lower! Who told you?" "No one." "What do you mean, no one?" "What I say; I just know it. You got in by the lower window which opens on the rue Cloche-Bleu, you . . . It was high time she woke up! And that mark that you took away on your nose – you still have it – came from the heel of her slipper." "In God's name, who told you that? It is important that I should know." "No one, I found it out by chance." "You have roasted me enough! Tell me, I entreat you." "Nobody knows about it here; but see Madame Yeury, and tell her to be discreet. . . . She did not tell me anything; as you are aware, I never speak to her." "But how could she know? . . ." "She knows all right. . . ." "If she is the only one," answered Gonnet, "I could force her to be silent, because I know all that happens when she comes to see Monsieur Parangon. . . . She goes into his office, and not to pick daisies. . . . If I cared to speak, I could get her a thrashing from her husband, who does not understand jesting." "Give her a good fright then. She told the whole thing to a vine-dresser of Grandcaire: that is all I can tell you. I answer to you for my own silence." "I have not the least anxiety about you," answered Gonnet. "If only you two are in the know, I shall not worry. I must see her.... I vow that I have never been to Madame Jeannin's since; and she really did give me the assignation. But apparently she changed her mind between giving her promise and keeping it.... For the moment I have little Tonton Lenclos, Yeury's niece. You know her; a blonde, and very amorous.... She makes no difficulties with me; but she repulsed Fusier, who approached her too coarsely.... She has a friend whom I could get for you, if the idea pleases you; and we could have some private little parties; for you are quiet, and I am not noisy." I thanked Gonnet for his offer, without either accepting or refusing it. I was careful not to refuse, because it would be wise to have an adventure ready-made in case of an accident.

Thus my mind was turned away from remorse; and that was not all. On the evening of M. Parangon's return, I lost myself in a lonely reverie of which he was the subject (for in spite of everything, I knew nothing of *abstentions* between husband and wife), and when I returned the door was locked. I took good care not to knock! I ran to Gaudet d'Arras to ask for the wetting-room key. I could not get at him. As I was returning, Marie was just letting in Gaudet quietly. I told him my difficulty. "Gad, you shall sleep with me!" We climbed up to his turret, went to bed and, after chatting a little, to sleep.... Waking up about two o'clock in the morning, I found myself alone. I did not know what had become of my companion. I called softly. When I was sure that I was alone in his tower attic, I got up and went down to the second floor, where a door yielded to my touch;

I went in, meaning to amuse myself with the fright I was going to give to Marie. "Is that you?" came a low whisper. I held my tongue and went towards the bed, guided by the voice. "I do not want it!" said a voice which was totally unknown to me. I got into bed, in spite of this little protest, after having made sure that she was alone. I thought I would play a trick on Gaudet, and promised myself a good laugh when he came and caught me. . . . I found myself with a fine plump girl who, after a few kisses, laid aside all pretence, and treated me as a man who was expected and desired. I was tempted to be generous and to disclose my identity; but at first I was restrained by the fear of mortifying the girl, and afterwards this fear grew so strong that I ended by replacing Gaudet most completely. . . . I was amazed at the perfection of the body abandoned to me! . . . But I kept on wondering: *With whom am I! . . . And where is Gaudet?* . . . At first I had wanted him to find me taking his place, but very soon I was afraid of it; the call of nature was strong, and I exercised his rights again. . . . I passed more than an hour at this sweet business waiting for my host. . . . At last I left the girl, and went upstairs again. To my great astonishment the bed was still empty. It had occurred to me, as I was leaving the girl, that perhaps Gaudet had been beforehand with me, or that his absence had only been caused by some pressing need, etc.; but when I did not find him on my return, I was convinced that he had been made happy elsewhere. But who was my unknown? There was no one in the house but Marie and the Mistress. . . . About half-past six, just before daybreak, Gaudet came back. I heard him, but pretended to be asleep. He got into bed gently; but once there, he took no more trouble. "Did you sleep well?" he asked. "As far as I know, I slept right through the night." "That's good! I was afraid that the change of bed might have given you a bad night."

We left it at that, and I was as discreet as himself. We got up, and I went home to work.

At midday after dinner, I went to M. Minon's to see who was there. As I arrived, I caught sight of two girls; one was Marie and the other a fresh, pretty abundant woman, who looked by no means shy. I asked Gaudet if this pretty young girl had slept in the house. "Yes," he answered, nodding. Then he took me aside. "She is from Paris, where she works with a lawyer, the brother of our mistresses, Madame Minon and Madame Parangon. She is staying here a week. She had promised to have me, and then played a trick on me and told Marie everything. Marie is jealous for reasons you know; so much so, in fact, that they changed rooms and the girl from Paris slept on the second floor. I was caught; and had to spend the whole night with my old mistress, to prove that I was not with the new one. She scolded me.... It took me four hours to appease her, and then it all began again." By this I was certain that I had had the new arrival. I looked at her expressively. She really was pretty.... She blushed at my attentive glance, and tapping Marie on the arm, said: "Do you see that unassuming youth there? Don't trust him!" Only I understood her.

This is the kind of unexpected adventure which fatally contaminates morality and destroys its delicacy.... In the evening a little pang of jealous anxiety impelled me to M. Minon's door. I wanted to make it impossible for Gaudet to repair his misfortune of the previous night, for the favours I had enjoyed were such that I did not like the idea of sharing them. The Paris girl was alone at the half-door, as Marie was waiting at table. For fear of missing my opportunity, I said brusquely: "Well, pretty one, I know that you received a young man in your bed last night, who ..." "Monsieur, I don't know what you mean, and ..." "You do know, so do not let us argue about it, or we shall have no time to talk . . . I was the young man, and it was quite unpremeditated on both our parts: my only idea was to take Gaudet by surprise; I did not even know you were there. We have never met. You are pretty, and the worst has already happened; let us come together to-night of our own choice. Gaudet will be with his Marie, who is very jealous; I with you, and everyone will be satisfied." The rogue smiled, but blushed a little all the same; I took her hand and she pressed it; and everything was settled. We seized our opportunity, and I slipped into the little staircase passage without being seen; she gave me the key and I waited in her room. As I slept alone at home, no one noticed my absence. Marie was delighted by the arrangement, which we could not keep secret from her, and, with her connivance, I passed the eight nights of *Flipote's* visit in her pretty arms, disturbed by only one adventure.

Marie, sure of her Gaudet, did not worry him any more. On the fifth night (the second during which he had been left in peace) the fellow came for a taste of the forbidden fruit. Flipote and I were very much awake. I had taken care to be on the side to which Gaudet would have to come first. When he was near the bed, he put out a hand, and touched . . . the bristly face of a man, who appeared to be asleep! Gaudet retreated. The idea came into his head that it was his lawyer. . . . He quivered; he thought he had a golden opportunity. . . . He went downstairs and opened a door, turning the handle softly; for no one draws their bolts in these houses. He reached the bed, and groped: the lady was alone. "Gracious, my dear, you're very late!" Gaudet did not answer a word, but pretended to undress. It is impossible to say what the rash youth would have done if M. Minon, who sometimes spent a part of the night at play, had not gently turned the key. Gaudet got behind the door, and while M. Minon was fetching a light from Marie's room, he got quickly back to his turret. I heard all this next day from himself.

On the ninth day, Flipote's mistress arrived from Semur-en-Auxois; she had not wanted to take her maid there on account of a young man of Semur, whom her husband had been obliged to dismiss because he fell in love with the girl. . . . The attorney's wife stayed with Mme Parangon, her dearly loved sister-in-law. But she only remained for three days before going back to Paris. In the course of time Flipote became pregnant, and said that I was the man. Mme Parangon was written to, and made enquiries at her sister's house, without saying anything to me. She was assured that I had never even spoken to Flipote. Gaudet was suspected, and M. Minon a little; and even M. Parangon, because he had jested with the girl in the day-time. Marie kept me informed. She could not betray me without compromising herself, as she had been my accomplice. . . . I never knew the end of the story until 1759 when, with Gaudet's help, I met Flipote again in Paris. She was married, but had been able to keep our son with her; and her husband, an oldish man very comfortably off, was extremely fond of him, and had recognised him when he married the mother. The boy is now a successful draper in the Pointe-Saint-Eustache, and has a pretty wife and three fine children. Does sin (if it is a sin to beget a child) bring greater consolation than virtue? I have had more comfort out of my natural son than out of my legitimate children, whose misfortunes (mostly caused by their wretched mother) have drowned my last years in grief.

At this time, 1755, I had not as yet learned to dance. When the time of mourning for Madelon was over, Mme Baron began to give small informal dances again, and I was ashamed that I could not go. Moreover my adventure with Flipote had coarsened my sensibilities and I had conceived the plan of *having* Manon Baron; she was more friendly to me than Berdon, and, though reputed to be very amorous, seemed averse from marriage; so I hoped for some amusement while waiting for Mlle Fanchette. As her neck was slightly twisted I was not afraid of becoming permanently attached to her. I was further encouraged in this fine plan by the gossip about the two girls; not that they deserved it; but they were orphans, and that was cause enough for them to be slandered by their vile fellow-townsmen. I went to a dancing master, recommended by Rüttot. He was one of the Dutch taken prisoner at Fontenoi and at Bergopzoom, of whom several thousand settled in France. He taught me the first principles one by one. When I had reached the stage of walking to the violin, he asked one of his neighbours, a friend of his wife, to come and act as my partner. She was a young widow, a brunette, very pretty and not at all shy: a second Flipote. With her, not for her, I acquired a fondness for dancing that degenerated into a passion. In the morning I longed for the end of the day to come, so that I could dance. As soon as I was at all expert, Mme *Pernon*, my partner, took me to the ballrooms. . . .

So a new order of things began. Up to the present I had only visited the tradespeople in the town or honest folk in easy circumstances, such as those in our own house. In the ballrooms I mixed with quite a different society, daughters of artisans, working girls, and others who enjoyed considerable freedom. Mme Pernon introduced me to a number of girls belonging to the commonality, of whom some were very pretty, and to young men of the same class. This caused a complete metamorphosis in myself! Till then sedate and modest, I became giddy, dissipated, and a vulgar fop (not, however, with my old, respectable acquaintances, but with my new ones). Thus I belonged to two circles: I passed the day among my usual companions of both sexes, and the evenings, after supper, among the dancers of the ballroom. My usual companion in the evening was Colombat, Annette Bourdeaux's lover, and he was also the most respectable. Gaudet sometimes made one of our party; but he took a dislike to dancing, because his awkwardness made everyone laugh. However he was a thoroughly good fellow; he never got angry and was always the first to laugh at anything that made others laugh, so that he was very much liked in the ballrooms, and the girls ran after him even while they made fun of him. A big fellow of so promising an appearance seemed to them worth consideration – in certain respects, and they never laughed at him noisily, but gently, as one laughs at those one loves; also their little attempts to teach him the social graces were made with affection. But Gaudet, though very fond of women in general, could never take advantage of this kindly disposition towards him; he cared only for servants, among whom he shone. Sometimes he would bring a dozen of these with him, followed by as many lacqueys; with the result that all the better-class girls left the ballroom, while the men devoted themselves joyously to the chambermaids, for the most part simple peasants and very shy. Colombat, the very opposite of Gaudet, was a pretty little fop, full of airs and graces to the point of affectation, which is the height of provincial urbanity; his effeminate beauty would have turned all heads in Paris, but in our town we did not think very much of him. . . . I stood somewhere between Gaudet and Colombat. My serious expression made me look twenty-five years old, and this was the age people gave me. I had a bright complexion and an aquiline nose; my eyes were fine and large, and so ardent that they were apt to look wanton when animated by pleasure; indeed my face seen under a woman's bonnet would have been irresistible to a French Guardsman. (In a few years I changed very much, insensibly and almost without perceiving it!) Fortunately I was still shy with my neighbours of the other sex, and above all with Madame Parangon, which curbed the freedoms of my eyes; but I was not so restrained in the ballroom, and my temperament would at times escape from them in long, fiery glances. My lips, as I have said, were a brilliant scarlet like my mother's; inviting and veritable organs of the most delicious of pleasures, they were the best thing about me. They won me many a voluptuous coquette of the commonality; for a woman who had once wasted her time in looking at them could rarely turn away her mouth from mine. Madelon herself had said to her sisters one day (Manon repeated her words): "He has a lodestone on his lips; one must avoid it or be lost!" I held myself well in those days, that is to say, I did not walk with my head sunk between my shoulders as now; I was well made and square set; my leg and foot were well formed, and above all I was quite extraordinarily light, which contrasted agreeably with my thoughtful air.

At the ballroom to which I went with Mme Pernon, I usually found the *Mlles Léger*, two sisters of whom one was very pretty; *Rosalie Maufront, Marianne* and *Marine Tartre* and *Sallé*; the two sisters *Lucot*; *Laurens, Babet,* pretty *Marianne Gendot, Maine Lebègue*; the three sisters *Julien*, the five *Morillons* (three sisters and two cousins); the beautiful *Colombe*, who was a notch above the others and only came with her three friends, the sisters *Aglaé, Aimée* and *Madelon Ferrand*; Mlle *Douy*, a beautiful brunette with a sallow skin; the *Lacour* sisters, two tall girls; the *Jouan* sisters, the gentle and amiable *Gremmeret*, the two *Tangis* sisters and their cousin *Dorothée*; *Jeannette Demailly, Manette Herisson,* etc. Also the chambermaids from the big houses: *Nannette-Prévost, Julie de Curgis, Marianne-Linard, Suzette-Pressurot, Naturelle-Borne, Percinette-Beaudisson, Marianne-Tierrat, Hélène-Luidivine-Clément, Honorée-de la Rupelle,* and *Chiffonne-Pincemaille.* (They were called by their Christian names and the surnames of their masters.) And finally *Tonton Lenclos* and the sisters *Guigner*, who were only sent for in the evening when the weather or the lateness of the hour prevented our usual partners, who were excellent, from coming. Ordinarily my companions in the ballroom were the *Sallé* brothers, barge owners; *Piffou* the cooper, *Baras*, son-in-law of the carpenter Dalis and M. Parangon's cousin; *Léger*, brother of the two sisters *Jeanneton* and pretty *Manon*; *Dhall*, brother of two even prettier sisters; *Lacour,* and the *Gremmerets.* These, with the other sparks, delighted to display their graces, and still more to take liberties with expert and not too sensitive dancers. The sisters Léger, Mlle Douy, and a few others were better dancers than the rest, but some reserve was necessary with them; and still more so with the sisters Ferrand, with Colombe, the demoiselles Dhall, and Marianne Tangis. And here I must make an observation: it was the beautiful sallow-skinned Douy, of whom I knew Baras-Dalis to be the cherished lover, who roused my desire to the point of frenzy. It was not love, but an almost involuntary priapism. She was obliged to avoid me.... A relative of mine, named Séry, experienced the same erotic reaction with the elder Mlle Paradis, my cousin, who was a sallow-skinned blonde as Mlle Douy was a sallow-skinned brunette. This makes me think that it was the result of something temperamental in the girl, and subsequent observations have confirmed this.

The gatherings in the ballrooms were quiet, and the dancing was never disturbed by quarrels as at Paris. Country dances only began when everyone present had danced the minuet. Each man was entitled to two minuets for his penny, or one minuet with any other dance, for two or for one, that he thought suitable; for, if there was no one present who knew the dance asked for, the wife or daughter of the proprietor acted as his partner. It was the men who chose their partners, so that it was possible for a girl to get no dancing at all. However, this never happened. The proprietor kept his eyes open, and tactfully persuaded any man who had not yet led out a woman, to dance two more minuets with the neglected girl, or made one of his own pupils partner her. . . . We danced in turn according to the time when we arrived. The dancing master had ivory dice, similar to those used in loto only square, and he gave number 1 to the first arrival, and so on in order. After the last country dance, we handed back our dice with two sous, or four sous if we were paying for our partner. It is obvious that this amusement was not ruinous; for four or eight sous, one could dance after dinner and after supper, with a number of pretty girls and young men; and, when the dancing was over, one could make up a party for a picnic. In summer-time, we used to go to the *Saint-Martin* suburb on the road to Vaux, and eat cream cheese and salads fresh from the garden, washed down with excellent white wine cooled in the stream of *Vanvres*, flowing beneath trees the branches of which formed a delicious arbour. There we used to play at *Trou-Madame*, and *Siam* and *Boule*, etc. In winter we went to the pastry-cook pork-butcher eating-houses, such as *Sanglé, Julien* and *Chavagny*, where we ate five-sous pies, sausages, ham, game and fricasseed chicken, etc.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME
AND
END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME IN RESTIF'S EDITION

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## PROJECTED BY THE AUTHOR

## FOR THIS VOLUME

### 26. A STRANGE DECLARATION

*Monsieur Nicolas returning to the parlour at the moment when Mme Parangon and Toinette have just read his declaration in a shoe:* "I adore you." [*Page 199*]

### 27. THE TAKING OFF OF THE SHOES

*Monsieur Nicolas kneeling in front of Mme Parangon near the fire, and pulling off her shoes without unbuckling them. A pair of slippers are seen on a little table underneath the shelf. She is saying to him: "At least you might give me my slippers!"* [*Page 269*]

### 28. THE CRIB

*Monsieur Nicolas at the puppet-show, lifting up Sophie Xavagny; while Aimée Châtelain embraces him to prevent him from taking advantage of the favourable position in which he is holding the young woman. "I united Sophie and Aimée in one embrace!"* [*Page 273*]

### 29. THE ACROSTIC – MADELON BARON

*Monsieur Nicolas, seated at a little table below the shelf for books and shoes, finishing an acrostic. He turns round to look up at Madelon Baron, leaning over his chair: "See!"* [*Page 283*]

### 30. SHE IS DEAD

*Monsieur Nicolas on his knees, holding out his arms to Madelon Baron, whom he may not approach; she is stretched on a bed, her black curls dishevelled about her: "It is she!" – Her step-mother, Berdon, Manon and Marote in tears.* [*Page 299*]

### 31. THE STRAWBERRIES

*Monsieur Nicolas has given his strawberries to Thérèse Lalois and Julie Dugravier. They have turned to go, and he detains Émilie Laloge by catching at the bottom of her skirt; she falls at his side: "I took the hem of her dress. . . ."* [*Page* 319]

### 32. REMORSE – MADAME LINARD

*Monsieur Nicolas venting his remorse at the back of La Cité in the evening, and discovering, by the light of a torch from one of the canon's houses, a well-dressed man with a woman: "Remorse!" – Gaudet d'Arras in the shadow.* [*Page* 330]

### 33. THE HEAVENLY VISION

*Monsieur Nicolas, in the failing candle light, seizes a tall woman in a close-fitting white robe (Mme Linard). "It was Madelon!"* [*Page* 332]

### 34. HARDIHOOD

*Monsieur Nicolas in his shirt, lying on the ground by the bed of Madame Parangon, who is sitting up and stretching out her hand, saying: "Puss, puss!"* [*Page* 347]

### 35. THE NIGHT WITH GAUDET

*Monsieur Nicolas in his nightshirt entering a bedroom in which Flipote can just be seen by a light showing for a moment at a window opposite: "I do not want it!"*

*In the background, Tonton Lenclos has caught hold of little Marianne and is handing her over to Monsieur Nicolas: "You're playing the prude, I think!"* [*Page* 354]

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